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BEDFORD

SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION,

AUG. 27, 1879.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

BY

JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J.

ALSO,

A Sketch of the Celebration.

BOSTON:

ALFRED MUDGE & SON, PRINTERS,

34 SCHOOL STREET.

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BEDFORD, MASS., Sept. 8, 1879.

REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D. :

Dear Sir, — At a recent meeting of the Committee of Arrangements for the late Sesqui-Centennial Celebration, by a unanimous vote the sincere and hearty thanks of the committee were extended to you for preparing and delivering the eminently acceptable and instructive address upon the history of Bedford. It was also voted to request of you a copy of the same for publication. Trusting you may be able to accede to this request,

I remain sincerely yours,

GEO. E. LOVEJOY,
Secretary.

BEDFORD, Sept. 10, 1879.

REV. GEO. E. LOVEJOY :

My Dear Brother, — I cheerfully comply with your request by placing a copy of my address at your disposal. Some matter which was omitted in the delivery for want of time I have taken the liberty to include. In so doing, let me acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have kindly aided me in the collection of materials, and particularly to my brother, Mr. Josiah A. Stearns, to whose manuscript "History of Bedford" I have had free access. I hope it will, at no distant day, be completed and given to the public in a permanent form.

With the highest respect and esteem,

Yours truly,

J. F. STEARNS.

ORATION.

How sublimely impressive and majestic is the march of Time! Pulse by pulse beat the seconds and the minutes and the hours. Tramp, tramp, tramp! like a file of soldiers marching under your windows early in the morning, when you are half asleep, go the days and the weeks and the months. The annual festivals—Christmas, New Year, Fourth of July—are the mile-stones that mark the progress of the years, and on, on, on, pass the generations and the centuries and the ages, and the æons upon æons, to eternity! We stand our little day on “this bank and shoal of time,” and behind us are the ages unnumbered and before us a shoreless Forever! And here, just here, we have our work to do, our destiny to achieve.

We Bedford boys and girls have come home here to celebrate our good old mother Bedford’s diamond wedding-day. We reckon here by fifties, as you see. We cannot afford to notice twenty-fives.

Things have changed, it is true, from what they once were. The good old primitive days when Uncle Jim, the old bachelor, went a-courting to Aunt Molly Pollard, just once a year, on New-Year’s day, and sat with her into the little hours of the night, and then at length was married—“the Hassel he was!”—and lived with her up there on the hill, at the end of the long, grassy lane, till they were both over fourscore, were mostly matters of tradition when the oldest

of us were young. There have been changes, too, in the face of nature. The brook that used to roar and dash so grandly after a long rain or a copious thunder-shower, up near the north school-house, and in which we boys used to find so much sport, damming it up with stones and grass-sods and then letting it go, till we were wet half up to the neck, and had to go straight to our seats when we came in, and dry up as best we could, does not seem to be just what it used to be. And the tall, slender trunk of the old elm, which, till lately, stood stooping over on the very edge of the bank, with half its roots bare, just as it stood, to my certain knowledge, more than sixty years ago, — when the great hurricane of 1815, which blew off chimneys, overturned sheds and barns, and rooted up whole orchards in all this region, to the wonder of us all, did not start it, — is gone at length, quite decayed, as it proved, at the heart, but green to the last on the top, heavenward. Yet there are still the same green meadows ! I wonder if the boys and girls get as good sweet flagroot, — calamus, they call it, I believe, now, — and in the winter coast down the long icy slope with as merry yells, as they used to ?

Yes, times have changed, no doubt. In many respects, they have changed much for the better. As I walk through this beautiful street, I see tokens of a thrift and taste which conserves all that is good in the old, while it superinduces the new. And the old leafy by-paths, kept in good order, though scarcely discoverable by a stranger, still carry you all round from corner to corner of the town plot, through much of the most enjoyable scenery. And here are the same hills, and the same mill streams, and the same Concord River, winding along the border, and the birds sing and look just as they used to, the robins and the bluebirds, the bobolinks and the orioles, the "fire-hang-birds," we used to call them ; and old Bedford is old Bedford still, and I am ready to shout,

as we all intend to do to-day, with a right good-will, OLD BEDFORD FOREVER !

The anniversary we are now met to celebrate is the anniversary of a *town*, an institution quite peculiar to New England. What are called towns exist elsewhere, but they are a different thing, both in organization and in privileges and duties. In the South, except in Louisiana, the *county* takes the place of the town, and in the Middle States the town acts under the authority of the county. The same, substantially, is true of the towns or townships of the West. But in New England the town is a complete body politic, having its own organization, its own officers, its own functionaries, and its own administration. "It is," says an able writer (S. A. Galpin, LL. D., in the United States Political Atlas), "the political *unit*, a municipal corporation, with full corporate rights and powers, and responsible solely to the legislature." It is in accordance with this theory that the first Constitution of our own State, having been framed by a convention of delegates from the towns, was submitted to the towns for their approval, in order to its final adoption, and that, till recently, the towns were the direct source of representation in the lower house of the Legislature.

This distribution of the whole country into towns secured, at an early day, the emphatic approval of that very acute republican statesman, Thomas Jefferson, the third in the line of our Presidents. He speaks of them as "the vital principle of our government," and says, "they have approved themselves the wisest inventions ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government and for its preservation." "These little republics," he says, "are the main strength of the great ones. We owe to them the vigor given to our Revolution in its commencement in the Eastern States, and by them the Eastern States were enabled to

repeal the Embargo in opposition to the Middle, Southern, and Western States and their long and lubberly division, which can never be assembled."

It also attracted the attention and secured the warm approbation of that eminent French statesman, De Tocqueville, who visited this country many years ago, for the express purpose of studying its institutions, and wrote one of the ablest books on the subject that has ever been written. What attracted him most was the well-regulated, independent sovereignty of the people. "In the United States," he says, "it is believed, and with truth, that patriotism is a kind of devotion, which is strengthened by ritual observance. In this manner the activity of the township [he means the town] is continually perceptible. The native of New England is attached to his township, because it is *free*. He practises the art of government in the small sphere within his reach, he accustoms himself to those forms which alone insure the steady progress of liberty; he imbibes their spirit, and collects clear, practical notions on the nature of its duties and the extent of its rights." "England once governed the mass of the colonies, but the people was always sovereign in the towns."

A very fine *résumé* of their actual influence is to be found in a very able essay, read before the Massachusetts Historical Society, and published in pamphlet form, some years ago, by Hon. Joel Parker, of Cambridge, Mass. "It is," he says, "through the action of the town incorporations that the Puritan principles have been sustained, the New England character formed, the industry and economy of the people promoted, the education of the whole population provided for, and perhaps the independence of the country secured. I am sure I do not exaggerate their importance, when I say that they have been the *arterial system* of New England, through which has circulated the life-blood which

has invigorated, sustained, and strengthened her, making her expand in her religious, social, educational, and political institutions and character."

It was near the opening of a most momentous period in the history of our country that what is now the town of Bedford was introduced into the sisterhood of towns, and became clothed with their important functions and prerogatives. The earliest trace I have been able to find of a movement towards that result is in the "History of Concord, Bedford, and the Adjoining Towns," by Lemuel Shattuck, of Concord. (Page 255.)

"The inhabitants of Winthrop's Farms," he says, "which were included in this territory," that is, the Bedford territory, "petitioned the General Court, in 1725, to be erected into a separate parish or town. An order of notice passed upon this petition, but being opposed by Billerica, it was unsuccessful." From the Billerica records, it appears that a petition to the same effect came before that town again on the 14th of May, 1728, which after two adjournments and as many long debates, was decided in the negative. Some concessions, however, were made to the petitioners in respect to taxes, and a committee was appointed "to give in reasons."

Again the case came up in the General Court of the Province, June 19, 1728, on a petition of Edward Watkins, John Wilson, and a considerable number of others, setting forth the great difficulties to which they were subjected, by reason of their distance from the meeting-house, in the towns of Concord and Billerica, and therefore praying that they may be set off as a separate township.

This petition was read, and referred to the next session, and the petitioners were directed to serve the towns of Billerica and Lexington with copies of it, that they might show cause why it should not be granted.

Then again, on July 18, 1728, a petition came in, of "divers inhabitants of Concord, Billerica, and Lexington, to be made a precinct, as entered June 18, 1728." This petition was read in council, the record says, together with the circular of Billerica, and referred to a committee, previously appointed with reference to Billerica lands, with directions to go on the ground, carefully investigate the whole matter, "notifying the town of Billerica of their coming, hear all parties, and report at the next full session, whether they judge it reasonable that the petitioners should be set off and constituted a separate township or precinct," the charges of the committee to be borne by the petitioners of the town of Billerica.

The committee took about five months, and then, Dec. 20, 1728, brought in a full report, the conclusion of which is, "that the committee are humbly of opinion that the lands petitioned for, as well by the Billerica petitioners as by those of Concord, and by a vote of the town of Concord set off to and joined with the petitioners of Billerica, are well accommodated for that purpose. That, therefore, the said lands, with the inhabitants thereon, be set off and erected into a distinct township," with bounds which they then go on to describe. These are substantially, I believe, with one or two exceptions, the same boundaries which the town has to this day.

In council, this was read and accepted, and petitioners had "leave to bring in a bill accordingly to the House of Representatives." Billerica now yielded gracefully, "voted that they would *act* something referring to the petitioners," choose a committee of eleven men to "manage the affair, and agree upon the boundaries, etc."

Billerica was "very reluctant," it is said. We are not told why. An old chronicler has quaintly said, "A rib was taken off from Billerica to make Bedford." Old Father Adam,

likely enough, was reluctant when he had to part with his rib. It is to be hoped, however, that neither of them was sorry when they saw what was made out of it.

Meanwhile the petitioners from Concord had taken care to forestall all opposition on that side by obtaining the full consent of their fellow-townsmen. As the petition is long, I give only an abstract of it. It is addressed "To the Gentlemen, the Selectmen of the town of Concord, in lawful meeting assembled," and sets forth that they, in conjunction with the southerly part of Billerica, having found themselves under the necessity of maintaining separate worship during the past winter, "by reason of their distance from the place of worship in their respective towns, have agreed to ask of them a dismission, that they may be formed into a distinct township or district, if the General Court shall see fit so to constitute them. They find it extremely difficult to travel so far with their families, and are tempted to say of the Sabbath, 'What a weariness is it!'"

They go on to disclaim all disaffection to the pastor or the church, their only desire is to be eased of their burden, "that the word of God may be nigh us, in our homes and in our hearts, that we and our little ones may serve the Lord."

To this Concord gave her consent, and now, the obstacles being all removed, their request was granted. It stands upon the State records as follows:—

AN ACT

FOR ERECTING A NEW TOWN, WITHIN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, BY THE NAME OF BEDFORD.

Whereas, The inhabitants of the northeasterly part of Concord, and the southeasterly part of Billerica, labor under great difficulties in their attendance on the public worship of God, and, thereupon, have addressed this Court that the land on the northeasterly part of Concord and the southerly part of Billerica, lying together, and whereon they dwell, may be erected into a township, and that they may be set off a

distinct and separate town, vested with all the rights and privileges of a town;

Be it therefore enacted, by the Lieutenant Governor, Council, and Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, That the northeasterly part of Concord, etc., be and hereby is, set off and instituted a separate township, by the name of Bedford.

Then follows a description of the boundaries, and the Act concludes : —

And that the inhabitants of the said lands be, and hereby are, vested with powers, privileges, and immunities, that the inhabitants of any of the towns of this Province, are or ought to be vested with. *Provided*, That the said town of Bedford do, within the space of three years from the publication of this act, erect, build, and finish a suitable House for the Public Worship of God, and procure and settle a Learned and Orthodox minister of good conversation, and make provision for his comfortable and honorable support, and likewise provide a school, to instruct their youth in Writing and Reading.

The above bears date in the margin, Sept. 23, 1729.

Three days later, by an Act of the General Court, Jonathan Bacon, "a principal inhabitant of the town of Bedford," was empowered and directed to "assemble the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town, as soon as may be, to elect and choose officers," to stand during the remainder of the official year. This he did, as he certifies, and convened them accordingly at the meeting-house, Sept. 26, 1779, and thus the first set of town officers were chosen. Jonathan Bacon was the first moderator, Samuel Fitch the first town clerk, and John Fassett the first town treasurer. The other offices filled were substantially the same as now. They had not yet got so far as to appoint school committees, assessors, or tax-gatherers, though the office of tithing-man was not overlooked.

Thus was the good ship "Town of Bedford" fairly launched and on her voyage. Let us see what her progress has been.

To give a degree of method to our inquiries, I shall speak

of her in what we may regard as the three principal functions of a town, as originally constituted in New England, viz., in her relations, 1. To the body politic of which she is a unit; 2. To the church and the interests of religion, which stand out so prominent among the reasons for her incorporation; and 3. To the general welfare and improvement of her own citizens, and of the community with which she is connected.

Of course, in so wide a field, and with so narrow a space of time as I have now before me, I can but select salient points, and treat of them in the most cursory manner.

1. First, then, in relation to the body politic, — to the interests of the State and the country.

Bedford, as I have said, was introduced into the sisterhood of the towns near the beginning of a critical period of our country's history. Already the approaching thunder-storm, which discharged itself more than fifty years later, was beginning to flash and rumble in the sky. The house of Hanover came to the throne in 1714. Men high in office were insisting that the charters of the colonies were not irrevocable. In the year 1715 a bill to that effect was proposed in the House of Commons. Great jealousy discovered itself in England, in regard to our rising manufactures. "In a little time," it was said with alarm, "they will be able to live without Great Britain." As early as November, 1728, it was suggested "whether a Stamp Act should not be extended to America." In 1729, the very year in which Bedford was incorporated, Governor Burnet, of Massachusetts, had suggested to Lord Newcastle that "some of the British forces would be necessary to keep the people within the bounds of their duty." Of course such signs were admonitory. But time passed on, and other interests delayed the crisis.

But the people were in a course of preparation. In the old Indian and French wars, for example, they had been getting trained to habits of self-reliance. In these, Bedford had her share. When Concord, long before the separation, armed her people for defence against the savages and established garrison-houses, two of these, as her historian tells us, were within the present limits of Bedford. I think I have seen the old cellar of one of them, still distinguishable in my childhood, near the roadside. And when Billerica, in great alarm, took a similar course, I recognize one Bedford name, that of Michael Bacon, whose house was thus appropriated; and Job Lane, unquestionably a Bedford man, "from his remote situation," says the record, "was allowed to fortify his own house, and have two soldiers, if the *country can spare them.*"

Those were rough and bloody times, any way. An ancestor of mine, Captain John Stearns, tradition used to say, captured an Indian lad, and would have taken him home, but the boy fought so furiously, as he held him on the saddle behind him, that he felt compelled to despatch him, which he did.

In Lovewell's fight, near Fryeburg on Saco River, Eleazar Davis, one of the founders of Bedford, but a few years before its incorporation, endured incredible sufferings and barely escaped,—a cripple for the rest of his days. And yet again Hugh Maxwell, one of our best citizens as well as bravest heroes, of whom we shall hear more hereafter, served bravely in the old French and Indian wars, and had the narrowest escape with his life. That was the same war in which Bedford's first minister, after his dismissal from his people, served as a chaplain in a company in which it is at least inferred were more or less of his former parishioners. Maxwell served five campaigns in that war. He went into it

as a private, and came out of it as a commissioned officer. Mr. Shattuck says, "*Several* of the inhabitants of Bedford sustained commissions." And yet, again, Thompson Maxwell, brother of Hugh, and a native of Bedford, who, according to the dates, entered the service when he was yet but a boy of sixteen, gives the following account of his connection with it, in a communication to Gen. James Miller, of Salem:—

"In 1758, enlisted as a private under Capt. Lovewell of the Rangers, reconnoitring with Capt. Samuel Brewer, of Waltham, went with Rogers' Rangers and destroyed St. Francis; destroyed their village, and upon hearing their war-whoop, we were ordered to disperse and take care of our selves. Chose Capt. Stark as our leader; lost our blankets and those we left at St. Francis; in eleven days arrived at first settlement, No. 4. Thirty-seven of our party died at White River, near Royalston; sixty enlisted with Capt. Barnes of Chelmsford. Soon transferred to Capt. Whiting's company. At Crown Point entered the corps of Rangers under Capt. Brewer. *In 1761 enlisted for the war.*"

To the honor of the town, it is on record that after the close of the war the town voted "to abate the whole of the rates" of a certain class of those who had served in it, "and all the others their highway rates."

And now the grand crisis in the country's history began rapidly to approach. In the preliminaries of that great struggle, the towns of New England stood prominent. And it is here that their peculiar aptitude and strength for purposes of mutual counsel, co-operation, and support, to which Mr. Jefferson refers, came prominently to view. The town of Boston, as being the largest, richest, and embodying the largest number of eminent men, naturally assumed the hegemony. They sent out invitations to all the towns in the

province, inviting them now to take action and express their views, now to send delegates to Boston for mutual counsel, now to appoint committees of correspondence, who should keep a vigilant lookout upon all the proceedings around them. Two of the meetings to which I refer were held in Boston, in the autumn of 1768; and though they disclaimed all pretence to "any authoritative or governmental" acts, and simply confined their action to a *petition* to the *governor*, that action was treated by him as a grievous offence, and answered by a threatening letter. Their meeting, itself, was unlawful, he asserted. "At present," he said, "ignorance of the law may excuse what is past. A step farther will take away that plea." He warns them, as a friend, to break up their meeting and separate, "for assure yourselves, the king is determined to maintain his entire sovereignty over this province."

The transactions of those two meetings were received in England with great indignation. The House of Lords took the case up, and in a series of resolutions declared the proceedings "illegal, unconstitutional, and calculated to excite sedition and insurrection in his Majesty's Province of Massachusetts Bay"; the appointment of a convention of deputies from the towns in pursuance of them, and the act of the selectmen in calling such a convention, they declared "subversive of his Majesty's government," and that of the towns, in electing deputies to it, and the meeting of such convention in consequence, "daring insults offered to his Majesty's authority, and an audacious usurpation of the powers of government."

That was the same set of resolutions in which was made the startling declaration that to call in question "the right of his Majesty, with the advice and consent of Parliament, to make laws and statutes, to bind the colonies and people of

America, subject to the Crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever," was "illegal, unconstitutional, and derogatory to the rights of the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain." (See "Newport Mercury," March 27, 1769.)

But the people had carefully considered what their rights were, and knew well how to keep the limits of their charter. The governor at length made a distinct issue with them, at the opening of the Provincial Assembly, January, 1773. These were matters, he affirmed, which a town had no right to consider. He was answered in a masterly paper, said to have been written by Samuel Adams. A town meeting, as he clearly showed, by the express terms of the law, had the right to consult and act in matters "of public concernment." And these were matters of public concernment. The governor saw it now, and acknowledged it in his private correspondence. "By an *unfortunate mistake*," he wrote, "soon after the charter, a law was passed, which made every town in the province a corporation perfectly democratic, every matter being determined by the major vote of the inhabitants"; a law, he admits, "which was *unfortunately* allowed by the *Crown*."

Thus the towns triumphed, and the proceedings which had been instituted to secure union and co-operation and vigilance in the maintenance of their rights, went on with increased vigor.

Now, what I wish you to take note of here is, that in all these movements, Bedford, as far as I can ascertain, never lost an opportunity. There are some papers on the town book which, were they not too long to recite here, would show, I think, beyond all question, that she both understood her rights and duties, and was ever ready both to maintain the one and, at whatever sacrifice, to discharge the other.

When a letter of correspondence was sent out to the

towns from a town meeting in Boston, asking from each of them "a free communication of their sentiments," it stands on record, that on the first day of March, 1773, "after solemn prayer to God for direction, and taking into our most serious consideration the melancholy state of the British Colonies in North America in general, and this Province in particular, the town proceeded to make choice of Deacon Stephen Davis, John Reed, Esq., Mr. John Webber, Dr. Joseph Ballard, Mr. John Moore, Mr. Joseph Hartwell, and Mr. Hugh Maxwell, to be committee, to take our grievances under consideration, and to report to the town" at the next town meeting, to be held on the 31st of May.

This large committee, comprising some of the ablest and most trusted men in the town, having had three months to deliberate, brought in a very full and carefully prepared paper, declaring their loyalty to the Crown, asserting their chartered rights, condemning, in a very decisive but temperate manner, the oppressive acts under which they were suffering, defending the course pursued by the people of the colonies, recommending the most earnest efforts to restore harmony and a good understanding with the mother country, urging to strenuous exertions to increase "the present agreeable union between us and our sister colonies," and making this decisive declaration of their feelings and determinations: "We should rejoice," they say, "to see the difficulties under which we labor, removed; but if every method which can be thought of for the removal thereof should fail of success, we are ready to join with our fellow-sufferers, even to the risk of our lives and fortunes, rather than give up our constitutional rights and charter privileges." The town voted unanimously to accept the report, to have it recorded in the town book, and that a copy of it be sent to the town of Boston. Signed John Reed, Town Clerk.

In that same year, 1773, Bedford had a representative, though not by any appointment of hers, at the famous "tea-party" in Boston Harbor. It was Thompson Maxwell, the brother of Hugh, of whom I have already spoken. "I had come to Boston," he says, "with my team. I had loaded at John Hancock's warehouse and was about to leave town, when Mr. Hancock requested me to drive my team into his yard, ordered his servant to take care of it, and requested me to be on Long Wharf at two o'clock p. m., and told me what was to be done. I went accordingly, and joined the band under one Captain Hews. We mounted the ships and made tea in a trice. This done, I took my team and went home as an honest man should."

I shall not attempt to vindicate the destroying of the tea. If justified at all, it must be as a war measure, or something of the kind; and about that such men as Hancock ought to know.

March 7, 1774, "the town voted not to use any tea till the duty be taken off." On the 30th of June, 1774, when in view of the Boston Port Bill, blocking up the harbor of Boston, and other oppressive measures, the stringent covenant of non-intercourse with the island of Great Britain was prepared and sent around to the towns, this town adopted it, spread it at *full length* on the town book, and appointed a committee of five men "to make a proper return of these proceedings, and to hold correspondence with other towns, in behalf of this town, as they shall judge necessary, until the town otherwise order." This committee is the same, with two omissions, with that last named, and is supposed to be Bedford's first *Committee of Correspondence*. When, in view of the distress inflicted on the inhabitants by that measure, the poor of Boston had to be billeted out upon the neighboring towns, Bedford had twenty-nine of these assigned to her.

The same year, Aug. 29, the town took into consideration "the propriety of instructing the Committee of Correspondence with regard to a meeting of this county, to consider what is proper to be done at this alarming crisis, in respect to the several acts of the British Parliament," and left it with the committee to "do as they think best." I learn from Mr. Shattuck's History, that this county meeting or convention was held at Concord, on the thirtieth and thirty-first days of August, "consisting of one hundred and fifty delegates from every county in the State," and that the delegates from Bedford were Stephen Davis, John Reed, John Moore, and John Webber, the Committee of Correspondence themselves.

In October of the same year, delegates were chosen to join with a Provincial Congress, "to be holden at Concord, on the second Tuesday of this month." Dr. Joseph Ballard and John Reed were the delegates. At the same meeting, the town voted twelve pounds to REPAIR THEIR STOCK OF POWDER AND OTHER AMMUNITION.

On the 18th of January, 1775, they voted at first not to send a delegate to the Provincial Congress to be held in February; but on the 27th, a new town meeting was called, and John Reed was chosen. Messrs. Moses Abbott, Thomas Page, Ebenezer Page, John Reed, and Edward Stearns were chosen at the same meeting, as "a Committee of Inspection."

Now, there is something quite sublime, as it seems to me, in the way in which this little town, one of the smallest in numbers in the State, "toed the mark," as we say, at every step, and showed her hand, and that "a *mailed* hand," in every emergency.

But the time for votes, conventions, deliberations, resolutions, was now nearly past. Battle, bloodshed, war, a long, tedious, seven years' war, was just at hand.

The battle of Lexington and Concord took place right

here on our borders. I shall not take up your time with any general description of it, nor attempt to tell over again the story which has been told so often and so well. Only so far as I must, in order to place in just and clear view, the part performed in it by the people of Bedford, shall I allow myself to enter into its details.

On the evening of the 18th of April, a beautiful, moonlight evening, a detachment from the force under Gen. Gage was discovered moving up the road leading through West Cambridge (then called Menotomy, now Arlington) towards Lexington. Parties of British officers had been seen, also, sauntering along over the same road. The object of these, it was suspected, was to explore the way, and the object of the moving force twofold: to capture, if possible, the two men most obnoxious to the British government, and known to be in Lexington, Hancock and Adams, but chiefly (for that alone could account for so large a force) to destroy the military stores collected at Concord.

You are all familiar with the preliminaries and with the first act of the bloody tragedy near the Common at Lexington. There the battle began, there the first martyrs in the war of the Revolution stood and received the deadly shot. There the fact became revealed that the American people were *actually at war*.

It was at the corner of the Bedford road, in Lexington, that the first blood was drawn. I waive, for the present at least, the mooted question, "Did they *resist* at Lexington?" They took the *fire* at Lexington! They stood, they fell, *in arms!*

The troops, having done so much, moved on to Concord, but the news of their coming had preceded them. It had already gone out into all that region, and all that night, in all these peaceful homes, rang out the cry, "To arms!"

The town of Bedford probably received the news among the first. Two Lexington boys, or young men, Nathan Munroe and Benjamin Tidd, at Capt. Parker's request, went up to Bedford, some time in the evening, and as one of them has testified on oath, "notified the inhabitants, *through the town*, to the great road at Merriam's Corner, in Concord," and then returned by that great road, the Boston road, to Lexington. It may have been one of them that waked up Ensign Page, so soon after he, with his young bride, who used to tell the story in her old age, had retired. It is quite likely that when they were along there, they made a short *détour*, and notified Capt. Wilson. No doubt, as they went up the road to Merriam's Corner, they stopped at Capt. Moore's. I have often wondered how the Bedford men got moving so early, and were so early at the fight. This fact seems to account for it. They had all night to rally and equip in. That morning must have been a stirring time in old Bedford, putting the facts together.

First, Capt. Wilson and his minute-men, who had been drilling for weeks by the town's order, and at its expense, marched up the road and halted in front of Fitch's tavern. My dear old uncle, Solomon Lane, — he was Uncle Solomon to all the Bedford folks in his old age, but he was my father's brother-in-law, a man of rare excellences, some roughnesses, no sham, who carried under his farmer's coat a heart as gentle as a woman's, — was one of the company. I tell the story as he told it to me. "Capt. Wilson," he used to say, "was a fine officer, a *fine* officer! I well remember him as he looked that morning. He drew his men up in front of the old Fitch tavern, and said, 'Come boys, we'll take a little something, and we'll have every dog of them before night!' He was," said Uncle Solomon,

"as lively as a bird, but he never came home till they brought him home."

Then there was the Bedford Militia, under Capt. Moore. I do not know where they rallied. I might think, on the Common near the meeting-house. Perhaps, however, as Capt. Moore lived up the Concord road, they may have rallied there, and by that means may have got the start of the others.

Both companies, however, were among the first on the ground. Ensign Page, it is said, laid down his beautiful flag, with its gilt fringe, on a stone, while he assisted in moving the stores, and when he came to look for it, the boys had got it and were playing soldier with it.

The soldiers in the middle of the town who had been engaged in removing the stores, — *our* soldiers among the rest, — when they heard that the British were coming, went down the road to reconnoitre. The Bedford minute-men were on the ridge when they caught a glimpse of the approaching foe, and some of them said, as they looked upon their glittering arms and accoutrements, flashing in the morning sun, "We must spoil their fine uniforms before night." As soon, however, as they saw them, and saw what they were aiming at, all the Americans turned back and made haste to get on the other side of the bridge, where were some companies already gathering to prevent the British troops from seizing and destroying it. There, as you know, at the old NORTH BRIDGE, near where the monument now is, was the first vigorous encounter. There was the first British blood drawn, and the British troops were worsted and compelled to retreat.

You will naturally inquire, Where were the Bedford men at that juncture? Happily, we know where they were. The venerable Dr. Ripley, of Concord, wrote and published

a very carefully prepared pamphlet on that battle, many years ago. In describing the forces that were assembled on the farther side of the bridge, he says (p. 17), "A considerable number of the minute and militia companies of Bedford were seasonably on the ground. The former was commanded by Capt. Jonathan Wilson, the latter by Capt. John Moore." Then, after various other matters, occupying several pages, he thus describes the order of the battle: "The Americans being ready, and determined to move on the bridge, orders were renewed"—the same orders that were given at Lexington—"not to fire, nor give any needless provocation, unless fired upon by the British; to which all assented. Col. Barret," of Concord, "then gave orders to march, and directed Major Buttrick," also of Concord, "to take the command and lead the companies." "Capt. Davis," of Acton, the gallant Davis who fell there, at the head of his men, "followed with his company." Then "Capt. Brown and Capt. Miles," both captains of Concord minute-men, "with their companies. Capt. Nathan Barret," also of Concord, "with his militia company. The captains from Lincoln and Bedford above-named fell in under the direction of Col. Barret, who continued on horseback in the rear, giving directions to the armed men who were momentarily increasing in number."

Dr. Ripley adds, "The precise position of every officer and company cannot now be perfectly known. The forward companies became more noticeable." And among these eight forward ones it should be noticed that two, one fourth in number, were from our own town of Bedford.

In that battle, Thompson Maxwell, a native of Bedford as I have said, was also present as a volunteer. He had just before removed his family to Amherst, N. H., but he was still here personally at frequent intervals. "I remained,"

he says, "at my common avocations, till April, 1775. Left Boston on the 18th, and got to my native town, and put up with my brother Wilson, who married my sister, and who was a captain of minute-men. Next morning early, he had orders to march with his company to Concord. He requested me to go with him. I went, well armed, and joined in the fight. My brother Wilson was killed. Next day I hired a man to drive my team home, and I never went home till after the battle of Bunker Hill."

Meanwhile, the excitement in Bedford was not quelled. "All day long," as I am assured by one who had the account from an eye and ear witness, "the bells were ringing, the guns were firing, the people were dashing back and forth on horseback," and all that could be learned was "that there had been an awful fight" and "ever so many killed." It was not long after the Bedford companies had disappeared, that two others, one from Reading and the other from Billerica, passed through the town on their way to the scene of action. Both reached their places of destination, Merriam's Corner, within a few minutes of each other, and were there to meet the returning enemy, just as their flank guard descended from the ridge. Both probably met here. Rev. Mr. Foster, who was a volunteer in the Reading company, says of them, referring probably to that from Billerica also. "We *rendezvoused* near the middle of Bedford, left horses, and marched forward in pursuit of the enemy."

About the same hour, and perhaps in company with one of the parties before mentioned, appeared here, tradition says, a veteran, clerical volunteer. It was the Rev. Isaac Morrill, pastor of the church at Wilmington. I have heard of the anecdote as being told of another party, but I am quite sure that I am not mistaken in the person; I have heard it often from the best authority, and besides, it seems in perfect keep-

ing with his character. There is now in my possession a sermon preached by him at Wilmington, April 3, 1755, "to Captain Phineas Osgood and his company of soldiers, before their going out into public service." That was when the New England States were straining every nerve to defend their country from encroachments in the old French war. Its title is "The Soldier exhorted to Courage in the Service of his King and Country, from a Sense of God and Religion." It has the true soldierly ring, and is as sound in morals and religion as it is brave and patriotic. The anecdote in question is this: When the news of the morning reached Wilmington, Parson Morrill at once seized his gun and mounted his horse. As he passed through Bedford, he called to rest his horse for a moment at the house of his brother Penniman, and was surprised to find him quietly at home. "Why, brother Penniman, are you here? Why on such a day as this are you not at the scene of conflict?" "Oh, I can't go." "Can't go? Yes, you can! Seize your gun, order your horse, and come along with me." "Oh, I can't go, I can't go! You go and fight, and I will stay here and pray."

The people, it is said, did not give him much credit for his prayers, seeing he would not act. But perhaps they misjudged him. Every man is not fitted for every kind^e of service.

Mr. Morrill, tradition says, hastened on, and was at Merriam's Corner in season to do good service, in the sharp conflicts which followed with the retreating foe.

But I must leave this. Capt. Wilson, as you know, was killed in the hot battles of the pursuit, having already gone through some of the fiercest of them; and Job Lane, one of Bedford's first men, severely wounded and disabled for life.

Bedford was represented also in the battle of Bunker (alias Breed's) Hill, by the two Maxwells. Hugh was the senior

captain in Col. Prescott's regiment ; Thompson, a lieutenant in Col. Reed's. I follow Thompson's narrative. Both were on Breed's Hill on the afternoon of the 16th, at a consultation of the two colonels. At Col. Prescott's request, Captain Maxwell, who was an engineer, "laid out the ground for the entrenchments." His brother "set up the stakes after him." Prescott's regiment remained on the hill through the night. Reed's withdrew to their post on Charlestown Neck at seven o'clock in the evening, but were back by daylight on the 17th. It was then that, on Captain Maxwell's suggestion and Col. Prescott's order, the connecting link was formed between the "night's work" and "the rail fence," and so the lines were completed. The two brothers executed this order in the same way as the other. There Reed's regiment formed by Col. Prescott's order, and there Lieut. Maxwell remained, as he informs us, during the battle. He adds, "We were all drove from the hill. On our retreat we went in disorder, *mixed up*."

And these are but distinguished specimens. All through that protracted war and the political movements that accompanied it, the town records, to a marvellous extent, beat pulse by pulse with the action of the country. Mr. Shattuck, in detailing the contributions made here from time to time to the burdens of the war, both of men and money, closes one of his paragraphs with a note of admiration, and another, the closing one, with the remark, "When it is recollected that the town of Bedford then contained only about four hundred and seventy inhabitants, it is truly wonderful that they could submit to so frequent and so heavy burdens of pecuniary and personal service."

And when the great irrevocable step was to be taken, sun-dering the colonies forever from the British crown, it is on record that "the town being met for the purpose of advising

their representatives whether the Honorable Congress should, for the safety of the colonies, declare them independent of Great Britain," the town voted "That we, the said inhabitants, will solemnly engage with our lives and fortunes to support them in the measure." There may not have been much *power*, perhaps, there certainly were not large numbers or great resources, but surely there was much "pluck" and readiness, in what our daft, old roving Jester Chaplin used to call affectionately, "Our little *disposition* Bedford."

In "Shay's Rebellion," as it has been called, which broke out several years later, the town seems at first to have leaned strongly towards conciliatory measures. In the first convention of delegates from the towns, which met at Concord, Aug. 23, 1786, such measures seem to have prevailed; and to the second, which was to meet on the 9th of September, its delegates were appointed expressly "in order to devise some salutary measures to quiet the minds of any body or bodies of people that shall attempt to oppose government in any unconstitutional manner whatsoever." When, however, it became plain that attempts at conciliation served only to aggravate violence, the town showed its hand very decidedly in another direction. First a body of volunteers was called for, who should "march to Worcester for the support of the Government"; and for the encouragement of such enlistments, forty-two shillings per month was agreed upon. This body of volunteers, tradition says, was actually raised, and marched to Worcester under the command of Capt. David Reed. Another body of men marched to Concord and then to Stow in order to join Gen. Lincoln's army, under the command of Capt. Christopher Page. It does not appear, however, that any active service was required of either of them, and the insurrection, though very violent at first, was soon suppressed.

In the war of the French Revolution, the people of this country took a deep and excited interest. At first it seemed to them all as if a new millennium was breaking in, but as time passed, and they saw what atrocities were enacted, and how perfectly mad many of the actors seemed, thoughtful and conservative men began to pause. A little anecdote may serve to illustrate this. An old sage of Billerica, who, however, lived just on the border and had many connections with Bedford, and no doubt spoke its sentiments, being away from his home, had occasion once to stop at a tavern. As he sat by the fire in the chimney-corner, a company of rather noisy young men began discussing the French Revolution. Not relishing their coarse jokes and profane expressions, he kept silent, and being a plain farmer, they did not notice him. By and by, however, the conversation flagging, they turned that way, hoping to get some sport out of him. "Come, daddy," said one of them, "what do you think of it?" "Humph!" said the old man and kept silent. "Come, come, old daddy," said they all, "you've got to tell us." At length the old man opened his lips, and began oracularly: "When the French Revolution began, and they were struggling, as I thought, for liberty, I went heart and hand with them; but when they cast off fear, and restrained prayer, gave their noble for ninepence, and their ninepence for nothing, then I gave 'em up." "Well done, daddy!" cried they all, "well done, daddy!" He said afterwards, "I felt *small*."

In our own war with Great Britain, the apprehension of French influence affected the minds of many. They thought the war unnecessary, and that it was stimulated by the intrigues of France. Still, when we were fairly in it, the people generally sustained the government. I well remember the panic, when the apprehension got abroad that the

British were about entering Boston Harbor. The people of Boston scattered in every direction, several families moved up to Bedford, — the Fitches and the Larkins and Esquire Hurd and his family, — and remained, I know not how long. About the same time a call was made for the militia company of Bedford. I well remember the panic that pervaded the families here, as they saw their husbands, brothers, and sons going forth, they knew not to what deadly conflicts. It was on a Sabbath afternoon that the company set forth; they marched first to the meeting-house, where solemn and earnest prayer was offered by the minister on their behalf, after which the company was drawn up on the Common, near the east end of the meeting-house, and the ammunition distributed to the soldiers, and then they marched away, and the people with sad hearts returned to their places in the house of God.

Happily for them all, the call proved to have been a mistake. It was another company that was intended. In a few days they were released. I was playing by the roadside near the school-house, all alone, making forts, I guess, in the cart-ruts, when the sound of fife and drum caught my ear, and presently I saw the whole company march up the hill and pass by.

These wars being over, there was, for many years, no general call for military sacrifices on the part of the people. Peace principles began to be carried to an extreme. Many among us began to fancy that there was to be no more fighting; but the time for that was not yet.

In our great and terrible civil war, when fratricidal hands were raised for the destruction of the nation, our goodly town was true to its ancestral character. The young men responded promptly to its call for soldiers. The women, young and old, busied themselves in preparing comforts for

the sick and wounded, and lint to stanch the blood, which, they foresaw, might be soon flowing from the veins of sons, brothers, fathers, husbands, lovers, in the deadly conflict. Some went as nurses to the camp. Fourteen young men gave up their lives in the service. In various ways, I learn on good authority, "not less than \$5,000 was contributed to the war by this little town." The Soldiers' Monument, a beautiful red granite obelisk, surmounted by an urn, erected at an expense of about \$1,600 in our beautiful cemetery, is an affectionate tribute to their memory from the ladies of the town.

2. I pass now to consider my second proposed point, viz., the relations of Bedford, as a town, to the interests of the church and religion.

This part of the functions of a town had its root in what was the prime object of the settlers of this country. We have seen how this object stands foremost in all the plans and motives of the settlers here, and the prominence that was given it in the charter.

The meeting-house, being now finished, at least so far as to be occupied, £40 was raised (the *first* money ever raised by the town as such) "to maintain *preaching* among us."

Next, as in old Bible times, the people "offered *willingly*," and a subscription of £179 10s. was made on the spot, in sums of from £5 to £36 to a man.

Then they held a fast, and after the fast a town meeting for the election of a minister; and the choice fell on Mr. Nicholas Bowes. This done and the terms for settlement and salary agreed upon, the pastor elect signified his acceptance, and the ordination took place July 15, 1730.

At the same time, and by the same council, the church was organized. The covenant on which it was founded is very

clearly and happily expressed and breathes an earnest and evangelical spirit. Twenty-four male members, including the pastor, set their names to it, and a few weeks later the Lord's Supper was first administered.

Of the ministry of Mr. Bowes I glean but little. One eminent citizen of the town and member of the church, John Reed, Esq., made profession of his faith during his ministry. We are already familiar with his name by its frequent recurrence in the town records. He died Nov. 20, 1805, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, during the ministry of Mr. Stearns, to whom he was as a counsellor and a father, and who, at his death, paid a most affectionate and admiring tribute to his memory.

Mr. Bowes sustained the office of minister here about twenty-four years. Some occurrences of a painful nature, it is said, led to his dismissal. There must have been, however, some redeeming features in the case, or the town would not have employed him five months after his dismissal as a teacher of one of their schools, nor the military company already referred to have chosen him for their chaplain. His dismissal was given him by the church Aug. 22, and by the town Sept. 2, 1754. The whole number received into the church on profession of their faith during his ministry is one hundred and thirty-four.

The next minister was the Rev. Nathaniel Sherman, brother of that distinguished civilian, Roger Sherman, of Connecticut, and grand-uncle of Judge E. R. Hoar, late attorney-general of the United States, and of Hon. George F. Hoar, United States senator from Massachusetts. Mr. Sherman seems to have been a man of earnest piety and ardent zeal; but he was a man of feeble health and thereby subject to frequent interruptions. The town dealt generously by him in providing for the supply of the pulpit

when he was disabled, and only once seem to have got out of patience. It was during his ministry that Hugh Maxwell, whose name has been mentioned here more than once, came into the communion of the church. The Maxwell family came to this country from Ireland in 1733, and settled in Bedford. The parents were of the Scotch-Irish race, and very strict in their religious principles. Hugh was but six weeks old when they embarked with him for America. He must have had his home in Bedford about forty years. He was a fine specimen of a Christian soldier, as ardent in his piety as he was unflinching in the service of his country. He served not only, as I have said, five campaigns in the old French war, but through all the Revolutionary war, from Bunker Hill till peace was fully restored. It was in that old French war that he narrowly escaped butchery from the savages. And to the impressions made upon him in that providential rescue, he ascribed his conversion. The whole case is very tenderly related by his daughter in a beautiful memorial of him, in which we find this record: "At the age of twenty-two he joined the Congregational Church in Bedford, Rev. Mr. Sherman, pastor, and during his whole subsequent life gave evidence that his professions were sincere."

Some time after Mr. Sherman's settlement a controversy arose respecting the terms of church membership. It was not peculiar to this town, but was one that was agitating the community of churches. The people differed (some of them) from their pastor, and that led to his dismissal. His ministry lasted only twelve years, during which, it is said, forty-seven were received into the church.

The next minister was the Rev. Joseph Penniman. His ordination took place May 12, 1771. A curious vote of the town stands on record here: "The town voted that the day should be *religiously* observed, agreeably to the solemnity of

the occasion, that they were determined, as much as in them lay, to prevent all levity, profaneness, music, dancing, frolicking, and all other *disorders*." Very good in the main! It is to be hoped, however, that sacred music was not intended to be excluded.

Mr. Penniman is said to have had some marked peculiarities. His expressions in prayer, it is said, were sometimes grossly irreverent and familiar. In my childhood several such were currently reported by the old people. Charity, however, would lead me to hope that some of them had got somewhat exaggerated.

However that may be, dissatisfaction at length arose on several accounts. An ecclesiastical council was called, and after three days' session, they advised unanimously a separation. The church and town accepted the decision, and he accordingly took his dismissal Nov. 1, 1793. Thereupon, the town voted, "To exempt Mr. Penniman's estate from taxation for five years, provided he should continue to occupy it so long."

I come now to the ministry of Rev. Samuel Stearns. It was the last ministry which the town, as a town, had, and by far the longest. Having heard a large number of candidates, the church chose him for their pastor and the town concurred, and having agreed with him as to the provisions for his settlement and support, they made arrangements for the ordination.*

Col. Timothy Jones made the generous offer to entertain the council and other ministers and candidates, free of expense, which offer was accepted. Five men were chosen

* Mr. Stearns's salary was changed several times during his ministry, to meet the fluctuations of the currency and other changes of the times, and was not finally settled until the year 1811. In this matter the town always manifested toward him a generous liberality.

as a committee to prop up the galleries, also to reserve seats for the church and council, and pews in the galleries for the singers.

The churches of Lexington, Billerica, second in Woburn, Concord, Lincoln, Carlisle, Andover, Epping, N. H., Chelmsford, and the Rev. Drs. Willard, President of Harvard College, and Tappan, Professor of Theology in the same, constituted the council. Rev. Mr. French, of Andover, preached the sermon.

A little anecdote may serve here to illustrate old times. When the answer to the call was sent in, the new pastor's expected father-in-law passed a Sabbath in Bedford and read it to the people. On his calling the next morning at the house of one of the parishioners, conversation fell naturally upon the young lady who was to be the minister's wife. The story is, that the old grandfather, sitting in his big chair in the corner, put in a question, perhaps roguishly, "Can she work? Can your daughter work?" "Work! Oh yes," was the quick reply. "I wish you could see. She works laces and muslin beautifully!"

Mr. Stearns was the son of Rev. Josiah Stearns, of Epping, New Hampshire, a native of Billerica and a descendant of one of the first settlers. His mother was the daughter of Rev. Samuel Ruggles, one of the ministers of that town. He was prepared for college at Phillips's Exeter Academy, and was a *protégé* of its honored founder. He passed the first two years of his college life at Dartmouth, and then removed to Cambridge, where he was graduated in 1794.

During all the early years of his ministry, he kept up very close and cordial relations with his Alma Mater, whose president and one of the most distinguished members of its faculty, as we have seen, took part in his ordination. They

were accustomed to send to him their suspended students, and a long list, including some afterwards distinguished names, were from time to time thus placed under his care and instruction. Among these was President Webber's own son, a young man of high promise and many attractive qualities, whose early death sent sorrow into the hearts of many. During his stay here, the visits of President Webber and his estimable lady were very frequent at the pastoral mansion. In those days, when there were no theological seminaries, young men preparing for the ministry were accustomed to place themselves under the guidance and instruction of pastors competent to instruct them. Mr. Stearns, from time to time, had several, one of whom attained to high distinction. I refer to the Rev. Dr. Willard Preston, of Savannah, who used to speak with much apparent satisfaction of having preached his first sermon in our old first Bedford meeting-house.

In those days, the demands on clerical hospitality were much greater than people now have any conception of. The country taverns were not always a pleasant place of accommodation for travelling ministers. Hence those who were disposed to be hospitable found their hospitality often drawn upon quite beyond their convenience. Such was the case not seldom at the pastoral house in Bedford, yet I never heard either its master or its mistress utter a word of complaint, although the children, especially the boys, did sometimes experience rather close packing.

Mr. Stearns's ministry, reckoning it to the time when he ceased to preach for the town, extended over a period of a little less than thirty-seven years, or reckoning it to the time of his decease, a little less than thirty-nine years.

It will, of course, be impossible for me even to allude to the many interesting events of that protracted period. The

good old fathers and mothers of the congregation came around him, and stood by him with a cordiality seldom realized. They were his counsellors, his supporters, his friends, and they, in turn, leaned upon him with affectionate confidence; and the young people, as they grew up, found in him the most cordial sympathy and the most tender interest in their welfare. Nothing pleased him more than to engage their affections and make them happy, and nothing seemed to please them more than to attract his attention and win his smile of loving recognition.

He preached regularly on the Sabbath morning and afternoon, — never in the evening in the earlier days. The old meeting-house, I fancy, never saw a light except through the doors and windows, and never a fire, except in the foot-stoves.

There was no part of the worship in which Mr. Stearns took greater pleasure than in the music, in which he often bore his part. He had a fine tenor voice, and in his college days had led the singing in the college chapel. If it chanced, as it sometimes did, that the choir was missing, the minister would set the tune and carry his own part; and Uncle Solomon Lane, who had a voice, as they used to say, heavy enough to "make the summers start" in the old oaken ceilings, would put in his bass; and the ladies, with their sweet, gentle voices, would supply the treble, and the people generally liked it so well that the choir soon got reconciled and came back.

As to evening meetings, they were not much approved in the early days, but prayer-meetings were held at frequent intervals in private houses or at school-houses, and many other methods were from time to time adopted. Among others there was a society of the young people, called "the catechetical society," in which questions were given out, with

references to Scripture places, which the members were to find and write out, and to bring them in at a subsequent meeting. The minister had also his semiannual "catechising," at which the children and youth used to attend, in numbers of from fifty to a hundred. For the younger ones, there was a book of easy questions, and for the older, the larger and more abstruse one. To encourage attention to this last, it was provided that those who should recite the answers through at any one time, should be advanced to a special seat, called the "spectators' seat." It was very seldom that a meeting occurred, where there was not some one or more, who aspired to that honor. Exercises like these have been superseded by better ones since the introduction of Sabbath schools. But Sabbath schools in those primitive days had hardly been thought of.

In the visitation of the sick, Mr. Stearns was peculiarly assiduous. I have been astonished in looking over his memoranda, to see how constant was his attendance, sometimes daily and even twice in the day, and from month to month, on the sick and dying; and very signal was his success, especially with the young, in soothing their sufferings, impressing upon them the truths of the gospel, and preparing those who were approaching death for a peaceful and even joyous departure. I could mention names not a few, but that is not desirable.

He took a deep interest, too, in the secular affairs of the town, and used to open the town meetings with prayer, but never voted, except for State officers and in State and national affairs. In these he was always careful not to be wanting. I remember how the selectmen used to call upon him, sometimes in a body, and walk with him to the place of assembling, and with what feeling of respect I used to look upon that dignified body of town magnates. It was

one of the special advantages of the old town system, that the minister would regard the whole settlement as his charge, and its highest welfare, temporal as well as spiritual, as a proper subject of his attention. Mr. Stearns felt this, in the early part of his ministry, to an eminent degree. He had taken Bedford as his charge, and having done so, he turned a deaf ear to the most flattering solicitation. His motto was, "I dwell among mine own people." One of the objects he had in view, in purchasing the fine, large estate in the middle of the town, which, with his small settlement and moderate patrimony, he hardly felt able to do, was that by bringing the *front lots* into the market, he might promote the prosperity of the town. And so it proved. The first store ever built in Bedford was built on ground furnished by him for that purpose, and the first man that ventured on so bold an undertaking was a young friend of his and of his noble wife, by whose joint influence he was induced to undertake it. When he had leisure or felt the need of recreation, nothing pleased him more than to go out into the fields with the farmers, and to talk with them about their methods and the results, and having had some experience in his youthful days, he would sometimes drop a valuable hint. One of the best farmers we ever had here used to say that Mr. Stearns first taught him the best way to plough. And so it was, in different ways and degrees, in respect to *all* the interests of the people whom, without distinction of persons, he was accustomed to call "*my people*." And the good old fathers of the town saw and appreciated it. They confided in his judgment; they made him chairman of their school committee; they sought his counsel in things secular as well as religious.

And here, I must not fail to mention one of our most characteristic parochial institutions. I refer to the annual wood-cutting, to us boys at the old pastoral house, and perhaps

also to some of our young neighbors, about the biggest holiday of the year. As a part of the salary of Mr. Stearns, the town had agreed to give him "twenty cords of good, merchantable oak wood." It was given out in parcels, larger or smaller, to the lowest bidder, and brought on sleds during the winter, and piled or "corded" up in sticks of four feet long and piles of four feet high, along the east wall of the side dooryard. At the March meeting, the selectmen came, often in a body, and viewed and measured the wood, and if they found it satisfactory, would accept it and so report to the meeting. Thereupon, a time would be agreed upon, and an invitation given to meet and "give the minister a lift towards cutting it up." Early in the afternoon, the men of the town, old and young, with axe on shoulder, gathered in the yard. And sure enough, it was a merry time,—forty or fifty axes, wielded by the strong, muscular arms of the farmers of the town, and two or three big saws, each plied by two old men, and the big chips flying in every direction, and the boys running to and fro with their wheelbarrows piling up the wood; and then the lunch, with the big table set out of doors, and the doughnuts and the delicious drop-cakes, and the bread and cheese, and the other refreshments, then regarded as salutary if only taken very moderately, and the jokes and the laughs and the shouts, which now and then made the welkin ring. I tell you, it was a merry time in the old wood-yard on "wood-cutting day."

But the most conspicuous event in the history of this ministry was the building of the new meeting-house in 1816 and 1817. It was a great undertaking as the times were. But the people of the town showed a large degree of resolution and unanimity. Of all the pew-holders, not more than two or three showed any permanent dissatisfaction. The last

service in the old meeting-house was held early in July, 1816. The sermon of the day took note of the event, but did not dwell upon it. That venerable house had been the theatre of nearly ninety years of the experience of this ancient town. There had the four pastors of the church taken upon them their ordination vows, there had the old fathers and mothers worshipped, and there had three generations of the children been baptized. There too, all through the memorable struggles of the Revolutionary period, had all the town meetings been held. But the dead past must not be in the way of the living and in-breaking future. That very week, as I suppose, the frame was stripped, and the old, heavy, oak timbers came to the ground with a crash. When the new frame was ready for the raising, the people assembled on and near the foundation, and with a few introductory words, the minister led them in prayer. It was a bright July morning, and young and old felt the intensest interest. It was no trifling matter, to take up bodily the huge sides of that heavy frame and fix them together in their places, but the result was soon reached without accident. It took three days, however, to complete the raising, and then again, on the seventeenth day of the month, the people assembled, and the minister led them in a prayer of thanksgiving, "standing," the record says, "on the floor of the new meeting-house." Meanwhile, arrangements had been made to hold public worship in the school-house. The centre school-room was in some respects well constructed for that purpose. The meetings were generally well attended. Every corner of the house, gallery, entry, and floor was occupied with seats. The great wooden shutters, that separated the entry from the main room, were lifted up. We little boys had to sit on the steps fronting the desk, and sometimes on the low, narrow steps leading to the higher

range of benches. On pleasant days, it was not uncommon to see the window-frames filled with eager faces of those who were standing outside.

The season proved to be one of peculiar religious interest, and was unusually fruitful in Christian results. The interest was kept up during all that autumn and winter, and in the spring, when *Election Day* came, that holiday of holidays in those times, at the particular request of the young people, the pastor held a service specially for them, and preached to them a very tender and paternal discourse from the second book of Chron. xxv, 9, "If thou seek Him, he will be found of thee." At the next communion in June, a company of seven made profession of their faith, among them the pastor's eldest son, then a student at Phillips Academy. In a little more than a year, the number received rose to thirty, among them some who proved themselves, through a long course of years, among the most efficient members of the church and citizens of the town. I well remember a remark made by the minister as we were taking leave of that school-house sanctuary, that this had been to him one of the happiest years of his life.

But we were all glad enough when the new house was finished and we got fairly into it. The "dedication day" was a great day in Bedford. Everybody congratulated the people. Many came in from the neighboring towns to attend on the services. The music was prepared with great care, and was sweet and stirring. The rich-toned bell rang out joyously from the steeple, a sound not heard before by us under our own Bedford skies, and the beautiful inside clock, with its rich gilded frame, surmounted by a gilded eagle with spreading wings and a chain of gilded balls held in his beak, though not yet set in its place, was in full anticipation, and now as we look back, can hardly be sep-

arated in memory; and to us boys and girls, who had watched every timber and board and carving, as the work had gone on, the whole result seemed a peerless specimen of the best and most fitting style of "meeting-house" architecture.

The bell, weighing nine hundred and ninety-three pounds, was imported from London by Mr. Jeremiah Fitch, a merchant of Boston, and the clock was presented by him as a token of his affectionate interest in his native town. Bedford never had a warmer friend or a more generous and untiring benefactor. The widow's heart blessed him, the little children saw his carryall pass through the streets, as he came and went on his occasional visits, with a thrill of pleasure, and in the pastoral house his name with young and old was a household word. Mr. Fitch was particularly interested in the children. It made a lively time in the old Centre School when one of his big packages of "picture-books" was handed in for distribution; and one scene has impressed itself unfadingly on my memory, in which the children in the summer school, being formed into a procession under the leadership of the "schoolma'am," marched from the school-house to the Fitch mansion, and there being formed into a line, received each his little gift from the hands of two beautiful children of their beloved benefactor.

The large association of ministers, of which the pastor was a member, were here in a body. Bedford town, in her ecclesiastical capacity, had by the acknowledgment of all acquitted herself nobly, and was prepared to enter upon a new era.

Just one year after this, July 19, 1818, our first Sabbath school was organized. It was the result of a good deal of deliberation and forethought, and was at once attended with decided success. Eighty-seven members were present at

the first meeting. The largest number at any one time was ninety-eight, the smallest seventy-four, the average eighty-eight, the whole number of different persons during the season one hundred and nine.

The school was divided into four classes, and each class into two divisions, the male and the female. Each division had its teacher. Mr. Benjamin Simonds was the first superintendent, and managed its affairs admirably. The movements were all conducted with a soldierly precision. Punctually at nine o'clock the exercises began, and punctually at the appointed moment we left the school for the meeting-house. Each class walked in the order of its number, with its teacher at its head, and at the head of the whole column was the superintendent. Sometimes in crossing the Common, the pastor, arriving from the other direction, would meet them at an angle, and he then taking the lead, the whole procession would file into the house, and then the whole company disperse to their places. I shall never forget those days, I am sure, or cease to hold them in grateful remembrance. I have been acquainted with many Sunday schools since, and witnessed the introduction of many Sunday-school improvements; but after all, none occupies a more conspicuous place in my memory, or a warmer one in my heart, than our dear old first Sabbath school in Bedford.

But I must not dwell longer on this department of my subject. The ministry of Mr. Stearns was, as I have said, the last ministry in which the town, as such, exercised its functions. The town of Bedford, in its organic capacity, ceased to act a little less than forty-six years ago. It was an excellent arrangement at the beginning, — this constituting towns into parishes, and making man, woman, and child interested in and responsible for the support of religion, but it ceased to be so the moment men began substantially

to differ. The moment the disagreement became general, the system was doomed. Thenceforth, they who differed in opinion had to become separate in action. I do not propose to discuss here the movements that led to the separation. I was here on the ground during most of them, a not uninterested observer; although, not being at that time a legal voter in the town, I took no part in its proceedings. Much there was that was painful about them. I have never been disposed to hold my fellow-townsmen on either side as altogether responsible for that. They did not originate the movement. It was the result of a great tidal wave of changing opinions and newly awakened activities, which was sweeping over this whole region and was predestined to reach Bedford sooner or later. Different persons regarded the same measures in different lights. I am not here to be either an umpire or a partisan. The whole proceedings were related, as I think, in a very candid manner, many years ago by my lamented brother, the late President Stearns, of Amherst College. If any desire to read his narrative, it is to be found on the pages of the "Congregational Quarterly" for 1868. He says, in conclusion, "If we have said enough to meet the demands of the case, let everything else unpleasant be buried forever." Believing that enough has been said by all of us, and perhaps more than enough, I say with him, "Let everything else unpleasant be buried forever."

But I have a word or two more to say, before leaving this subject. The proper functions of the town, in its corporate capacity, ceased, as I have said, in this department, with that separation; but their results are not lost, and the responsibility which was once borne and discharged so well under the old system has not ceased, but is only transferred. We have now here two religious societies, each organized upon its own principles, the heirs respectively of the old

church, and the old town in its ecclesiastical capacity. Let them now, each by their own methods, and according to their own convictions of the true and the right, responsible only to God, and paying all due deference to each other, combine their strength to make this whole favored population, with all that shall arise in it or come into it, in the highest, fullest sense of the words, a pure, temperate, upright, God-fearing and God-loving people! And may God Almighty bless them both in so doing, and guide them in His way!

3. There is one more department of my subject which I must not leave altogether unnoticed. It is the relations which our town of Bedford has sustained to the general welfare and improvement of its own citizens and of the community around it.

One of the first things that engaged its attention was the condition of the roads. It must be remembered that the territory which Bedford occupied was composed of the outmost wings of two contiguous towns. Of course it had really no centre, and no suitable system of intercommunication. The roads, if such they might be called, were like those old streets of New Amsterdam, described by Washington Irving in his "Knickerbocker," where, the magistrates not being up to their duty, the cows took up the matter and trod them out as they went to and fro between barn and pasture, according to their own sweet will.

During the first twenty-four years of its corporate existence this town was chiefly occupied with this matter. "Hearing the reports of committees, laying out new highways, widening paths into comfortable roads, changing the position of roads, chiefly engrossed the attention of every town meeting." At the first settlement of the town, there seems to have been no direct road to Lexington, except through

"gates and bars." So with the road to Concord. These beautiful streets, with their fine shade trees and smooth carriage-paths and sidewalks and the well-built thoroughfares, leading in every direction to the adjacent towns, and through them to every part of the country, have been the result of years of hard labor, perseverance, and expense. It is indeed exceedingly difficult, even for the local antiquarian, to find out where the first paths ran. They went straggling hither and thither, and most of them were hardly better than foot or bridle paths. The people had then no vehicles except carts, horse-sleds, and the like. They came to *meeting*, for the most part, either on foot or on horseback, the husband sitting on the saddle, the wife on the pillion behind him, and the children tucked in here and there, wherever there was a place to bestow them.

One of the two old horse-blocks which were conspicuous at the two ends of the old meeting-house, I understand, is still in existence. That tells the story. It ought, I think, if it were possible, to be brought out of its hiding-place, and exhibited here to-day as one of our most significant antiquities.

Gradually, however, the routes becoming fixed and the paths straightened, the whole became consolidated into a very comfortable, if not very direct system of carriage-roads. Most of these remain to the present day, and winding sweetly over hill and through hollow, affording some of the most charming glimpses and surprises of natural scenery, far away to the Monadnock and Wachusett Mountains, being kept in good condition, as they have been and no doubt can be at a moderate expense by the town, still constitute and will continue to constitute, by the pleasant drives which they afford, one of the most charming and attractive features of the place.

But the advance of business and the opening up of the interior country at length began to require facilities for more distant intercommunication. In the year 1791, a project was started for a new road with a new bridge over Concord River to Carlisle. Bedford shrunk from it at first : very little of the advantages and a large share of the expense, she perceived, was to come upon her. When, however, it was proposed, four years later, to carry it through and make it a thoroughfare, she took hold of it in good earnest and performed her part liberally and energetically. She gave orders that the town should be divided into eight districts or wards for the raising of the means, and clothed her large committee with ample powers to build and complete the road on her side of the river, award damages to the parties who should suffer from it, and assess the inhabitants for the expense.

It has proved, I believe, ever since, a very valuable avenue of communication, and contributed an important part towards the convenience and prosperity of the town.

Many years later, about the year 1823, another enterprise of a similar character engaged the attention of the people. I refer to what was known at the time as the Chelmsford road. It was designed to open a new channel of communication between Boston and the northwestern portion of New England, the southeastern terminus being in Bedford. It was a county road, and the county commissioners of course took the responsibility ; but the wishes of the towns lying along the route had an influence with them, and those towns, in turn, had to bear each their part in the expense. The project met, in some quarters, with a very determined opposition ; in one case, the bridge by which it was to pass the Concord River was demolished by a lawless mob ; but it was carried through. I well remember the demonstrations

of delight with which its friends hailed its completion, the great sleigh-ride with which they celebrated it, and the flaunting guide-board with which they marked the corner, at which it terminated at the Bedford end, "Free Road, Free Trade, and Teamsters' Rights."

The expectation and completion of this road again gave a new spring to the activities of the town. New houses were erected, new stores and places of public entertainment opened. Those whose memory extends to that time will readily recall the large, spreading wagons, loaded with barrels, that passed through our street in the summer, and the long train of pungs, that peculiar species of sleigh, laden with produce from New Hampshire and Vermont, some of them having passed through the Notch of the White Mountains, and every one of them made picturesque if not ghastly by one, two, or three large hogs' carcasses with snouts projecting, on their way to the Boston market; and how dolefully, when they got caught in a thaw, the clumsy vehicles grinded their way back through the mud (every man walking by the side of his team and sometimes lending it a lift), bringing up loads of merchandise of various sorts, adapted to country use and for the supply of the country trade.

That was a hard way of transportation, no doubt, but it displayed a merry scene to the lookers-on, when, on a fine day, the long trains, sometimes a hundred or more in a train, came coursing down the road and drew up in front of one of the taverns, seeking refreshment for man and beast, or perhaps lodging for the night.

It was in close connection with the opening of this road, and over its track, that our first stage-coach, running from Concord, N. H., to Boston, made its regular trip through Bedford; and when that failed, the Carlisle road afforded the requisite facilities, and for many years there was a stage

passing through the town over Carlisle Bridge, between Groton and Boston. Now, the introduction of railroads has superseded all that sort of transportation, and after a long course of efforts, with many discouragements on the part of the people here, the MIDDLESEX CENTRAL, with a station within ten minutes' walk of the centre of the village, and with eight trains each way in a day, making connection with the great lines of transportation to all parts of the country, has left little to be desired in that department. Till about 1825, Bedford had no post-office. Now, the telegraph conveys our messages to the remotest regions, and the wires of the telephone, already stretched through our streets, will soon enable us to talk lip to lip across the breadth and length of the continent.

But the industrial interests of our community are of even more importance to it than its communications. Bedford was, in the beginning, almost exclusively a farming town. I dare say the mothers and sisters of the olden time spun as good thread and yarn, and wove it into as good homespun cloth, as most of their neighbors. But manufacturing as a business had not been tried here. Mr. Shattuck says of it, "Bedford is not very well situated for an agricultural town. About half of it is meadow land, unimproved and partly incapable of improvement." No doubt such was the case, and more even might have been said. Our fathers had a pretty hard task set them to perform. But how have they fulfilled it? Look over these beautiful, smooth fields, with their rich burden of sweet hay which has but just now been removed into the barns, or those green corn-fields, where every stalk looks as if it might be a vast cluster or sheaf of living emerald, or those orchards, loaded with red apples and luscious pears. How came they to be what they are? Look back a few years. Tangled swamps, wet mead-

ows, producing nothing but the coarsest of wild grass, rocky pastures, where the huge stones lay so thick together that the cows and even the sheep could scarcely get their noses between them! Look at those heavy stone-walls! Who piled those huge stones? Who dug them out? Who was bold enough to put a plough between them as they lay in their original places? Depend upon it, there has been hard work done here with brawny arm and back and sweating brow, and there has been much wise, prudent, and enterprising management. I honor the men who can grapple with the forces of nature and reduce them to submission, and so make of the tangled wilderness a fruitful field and a garden of beauty! And there has been a great deal of this laborious transforming work done here. Witness, for example, the beautiful grounds and picturesque lakelet and commodious hotel at Bedford Springs. Who that remembers that spot as it was forty years ago could have supposed such a transformation possible?

But the activities of the people of the town have not been always and exclusively confined either to the cultivation or improvement of the soil. If tradition tells true, most or all of these little streams, some of which at the present day hardly do more than trickle through their obscure channels, were once the source of a very considerable degree of mill power which did not fail to be utilized by the people. Here, it is said, there was a fulling mill, and there a gun factory, and there again a carding mill, a saw mill, and a grist mill.

Some of these have been in active operation within a few years. One of them, it is said, was so before the time of King Philip's war. At one of them was established, not long since, a very thriving manufacturing enterprise, which bade fair to be permanently successful. But in the full tide of its activity, a disastrous fire destroyed both the building

and the machinery, and the workmen were dispersed and the undertaking abandoned.

The town was also, at one time, the seat of a very successful manufacture of what were called "sale shoes," that is, such as were designed for the general market. It was introduced here by Messrs. John Hosmer and Jonathan Bacon as early as 1805, and is believed to have been one of the first of the kind in the country. It was pursued afterwards by the Messrs. Bacon, Simonds, Chamberlin, Billings, and others. About 90,000 pairs are said at one time to have been made in the town annually. The numerous workmen employed increased its population, the crowds of young apprentices filled its schools, and the shops where hands were busily employed, and wits and tongues perfectly at liberty, were the scene of a social as well as industrial activity which reminded one of the hum of a beehive.

It may be thought this department of the activities of the town belongs rather to the enterprise of individuals than to the agency of the body politic, and so it does. But the two agencies cannot be separated. They act and react constantly on each other. The town itself acquires a character which reappears in that of individuals, and the individuals have a character which they impart to the town as a body. It is through the peace, order, and security which the town government insures to all the inhabitants, and in which they all partake, that the energies of individuals are best stimulated and their true manhood and sense of personal responsibility and self-reliance called forth. The industrial interests of our town have had their fluctuations, their successes, and reverses; but few towns, I think, in proportion to its numbers and facilities, can show, on the whole, a better record.

I intended to speak somewhat fully of the history of our

schools. It is to me an exceedingly interesting one, and highly creditable to the people concerned in it.

It will be recollected that this subject was among the conditions of the charter. The people must "provide a school to instruct their youth in writing and reading."

The first record which I find of their action is in the year 1732. The town then decided that they would have a school, and appropriated five pounds for the purpose. The next year again, they voted to have one, "but not at the centre." It was to be what was termed a "moving school," and four men were appointed to move it, that is, to change the place of holding it, "at their own discretion."

A committee of three was appointed to provide a master, and ten pounds was appropriated to sustain it. By and by they felt the need of a school-house, and a dwelling-house was purchased and fitted for that purpose. That now became the fixed place for the school. It stood near the west side of the Common and not far from the meeting-house. But there was need of schools in the "Quarters," and they made provision for one in each, the people furnishing room and fuel. During all this period, the appropriation ranged from ten to thirteen pounds for the year.

Then the Revolutionary war broke out, and for many years seems to have absorbed everything.

That being over, the subject was again taken up. All the previous action was reconsidered and a new plan adopted. The town was divided into five districts and a plan adopted for the erection of five school-houses, none of them to be placed more than a mile and a half from the meeting-house. Those in the Quarters were first undertaken. A committee of twelve men was appointed, and eighty pounds was appropriated for the purpose.

This work being accomplished and the schools all well

settled in their respective districts and each provided with a new and suitable school-house, the town proceeded, in the year 1804, to adopt a plan for their permanent management, and for this end a committee of five men were appointed. It consisted of Rev. Samuel Stearns, William Merriam, William Webber, Thompson Bacon, and Col. Timothy Jones. At a subsequent meeting, this committee brought in a full and elaborate report. It contained seven articles: No school master or mistress was to be accepted unless "qualified according to law." The winter schools were to be opened and closed with prayer. The Bible was to be read in the schools daily. The Assembly's catechism was to be taught in it. The masters were required to "impress upon the minds of their pupils the principles of virtue and piety, as connected with their respectability and usefulness in life, and also as highly essential to the support and well-being of our free Republican Form of Government." A school committee was provided for and their duties prescribed. They were to use their endeavors to secure constant attendance on the part of the pupils, and those whose parents were unable to furnish them with books were to be furnished at the expense of the town. They were also to "examine the schools according to law," and make report of their condition, and all difficulties that might arise in the schools were to be adjusted by the committee, according to their own wisdom and good judgment.

This last provision proved itself, in many a difficult crisis, a most salutary resort. It would often happen that some pretty rough elements would find their way into the schools. Of course complications would arise, requiring no small degree of vigilance, resolution, and decision on the part of the committee. I have in my mind two or three, which came more or less under my own observation, but I will mention but one.

That admirable old gentleman and admired preacher, the Rev. Dr. Gannett, of Boston, whose sudden death, by railroad accident, sent sorrow and consternation through the whole community a few years ago, in his early college life came up to Bedford one winter to keep a school in one of our districts. He was young and delicate and refined. The rough, lubberly boys soon saw that he could not stand rough handling: they put him down, they ran all over him, they did just as they chose; and the hardly less lubberly fathers got up an irregular district meeting, and forthwith voted him out. But passing through the middle of the town, on his way to Cambridge, he called on the chairman of the committee to bid him good by. Inquiries were made. The true state of the case was divined. "This is all wrong," said the chairman. "I will call the committee together, and we will have the matter investigated, and if you will come up, I will notify you of the time, and you shall have a hearing." It was done accordingly. The district were invited to be present. The boys and men were questioned, and the men required to bring in all their charges. Mr. Gannett was there. All parties were heard. The committee came unanimously to a decision, exonerating the master from all blame, and reinstating him in his place; and then granting him a dismissal on his own request, they gave him a very kind and cordial testimonial. The gentle youth went back cheered to his home, but he never forgot it. You will find, I think, some traces of the case in the admirable memoir of him prepared for the press by his son.

The schools of Bedford, as far as I have had occasion to know of them, have been in general of a high order. It was only occasionally that serious difficulties arose in them. The admirable regulations of which I have given an abstract were renewed substantially fifteen years later, on the rec-

ommendation of a much larger committee, and with a few changes, adapting them to the changing times, continue, I believe, to be the law of the schools here to the present day.

Bedford has had, I think, no permanent high school or academy. One of the latter order was at one time contemplated, but as there were several such institutions within easy access, it was not thought best to attempt it. How it was and where it was that the early college graduates obtained their preparatory instruction does not appear. Perhaps it was in their minister's study. Several of them, however, appear on the college catalogues. And one of them, Job Lane, who was graduated at Yale in 1764, attained to high distinction, was a tutor in the college, and his monument, which still remains in New Haven, bears a highly laudatory inscription in Latin. He died at the age of twenty-seven, Sept. 16, 1768. The whole number of college graduates from the town, as far as I have ascertained, is eighteen, besides those who have received professional degrees.

Private schools, however, from time to time, supplemented the instructions of the town schools. Such a school, for example, was kept for a considerable time for young ladies by Mr. Stearns, in the early part of his ministry, and pupils from Concord, and even from Boston, came and availed themselves of the benefit. Such a school was kept for a time, also, by Miss Phœbe Sprague. Mr. Stearns had also private pupils, fitting for college, or pursuing some branches not ordinarily taught in the common schools. There was also a singing-school almost every winter in the centre school-house, at which all the young people throughout the town had the privilege to attend.

Bedford schools come up in vivid remembrance to some of us as we gather here on an occasion like this, — the spelling-

matches and the examination days, the snow-ballings and the wrestlings, the competition and the successes or failures, the merry shouts that made the "welkin ring," and the chasing of one another over the benches when the magic words were uttered, "The school is dismissed." The dear old teachers, some of them, however, not much older than some of their scholars, who indeed "corrected us," *some* of us, "and we gave them reverence," at least after a while,—Master Chandler, Master Wheeler, Master Simonds, Joel Fitch, Philo Litchfield, Jesse Robinson, Miss Lucy Porter, Miss Betsy Sprague, Miss Patty Stearns, Miss Sarah Gragg,—how they come gleaming in upon the memories. These are all gone now! But there is one left, and in "my heart's just estimation, prized above" them all, whose prolonged life still leaves her among us at the ripe old age of ninety-two. Yes, yes! I shall not easily forget the tender care, the gentle correction and encouragement, which, at the tenderest age, I received, the first summer after her marriage, from Ruhamah Lane.

But most are gone, and the dear companions of our boyhood and girlhood, they too are getting fewer and fewer. Soon shall we all be "dismissed." May we get safely home!

But I must leave this subject, tempted as I am to pursue it. Our hour is more than out. I have come hither, fellow-townsmen and friends, to enjoy with you this gladsome anniversary. I have felt myself highly honored by your choice of me for this service; but many a time since I undertook to perform it have I wished most profoundly it had fallen into some more able and readier hands.

And now what have we to do? We have glanced over the past, and have been proud to see that our predecessors have proved themselves so worthy of their trust and privileges. Well it is that we should keep their memories fresh, and

teach our children and our children's children to emulate their virtues.

Bedford has within her borders one memorial of the past which is of great interest. I refer to what is known both in our topographical and our civil history as "Brother Rocks," two large masses of granite, standing face to face with each other near the banks of our beautiful Concord River.

John Winthrop and Thomas Dudley were two of our first men in the early colonial days, the one the governor and the other the deputy governor of what is now our goodly Commonwealth. They had differed with each other, and the contest at one time became sharp. But they came up here to look after their lands. "They went to Concord," we are told, "to view some lands for farms, and going down the river about four miles, made a choice of a place of one thousand acres for each of them." There they halted. The contest between them was now for precedence in concession, and each "offered the other the first choice." Finally Winthrop prevailed, and the first choice was accepted by Dudley. "So," the story proceeds, "at the place where the deputy's land was to begin, there were *two great stones*, which they called the *two brothers*, in remembrance that they were brothers by their children's marriage, and did so brotherly agree."

The General Court, we are told, in adding shortly after to the governor's land, "adopted the name of the *rocks*," in the act making the grant.

Now what I wish to suggest is, if the intrusion may be pardoned, that this most interesting memorial, standing as it does on our own soil, in that part of *Bedford* known of old as *Winthrop Farms*, ought to be carefully preserved and made as attractive and accessible as may be. We have many monuments all over the land to victories in war, and

the heroic men that achieved them. But here is one perfectly unique. It is to victory over self, to brotherly love and mutual deference, to peace and good-will! Bedford *Town*, it seems to me, ought to secure the custody and management of it. And an immediate movement to that effect, pardon the suggestion, would be a most fitting sequel to this our *sesqui*-centennial anniversary.

The past has its claims, but the past itself is in order to the *future*. The old, even of the now present generation, are fast passing from the stage; but the young, full of vigor and hope, are pressing on. Let young and old to-day clasp hands in mutual covenant, that, come what will, we will never show ourselves unworthy of our birthright!

We, who return now from this venerable spot to our respective fields of labor and responsibility elsewhere, shall carry with us a profounder sentiment of respect and honor, and warmer filial affection for this, our own mother town, than we have ever cherished before.

And let those who still enjoy the privileges of residents and citizens resolve with all their hearts to do the best in their power to make this beautiful and salubrious spot one of the most desirable, and that morally and religiously, as well as physically, in all the land, this goodly town a very jewel in the crown of her country and a source of blessings to all coming generations.

SKETCH OF THE CELEBRATION.

ON the 30th of September, 1878, the citizens of Bedford, in town meeting legally assembled, voted to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth year of their incorporation; and chose a committee of five "to carry the action of the town into effect."

This committee organized by the choice of Mr. Josiah A. Stearns as chairman, and the Rev. George E. Lovejoy as secretary. Several meetings were held. The 27th of August, being the anniversary of the assembling of the General Court that granted the charter, was fixed upon for the celebration.

A few preliminary arrangements were made, and the subject was reported to the town, with a request to enlarge the committee, and also to appropriate a moderate sum for the defrayment of necessary expense.

It was discovered that such an appropriation could not legally be made, and that matter was dropped.

The town, however, enlarged the committee, gave them full power to fill vacancies and appoint all needed subcommittees; and then selected the Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., of Newark, N. J., one of Bedford's native sons, to deliver an historical address.

The committee now began to work in earnest. Meetings were held nearly every week; but as the business pressed and anxieties increased, it was but natural that some should become discouraged and withdraw. The places of such, however, were soon filled, and those who now constituted the committee determined to persevere. They selected Mr. O. J. Lane for treasurer, and then sent forth, to all friends of Bedford, a circular, inviting contributions in sums of five dollars, more or less, to forward the cause.

This met a very general and gratifying response. To inspire further enthusiasm, a grand rallying meeting was held, at which the Woburn Band was employed, and speeches were made by the Rev. Messrs. Reynolds, Patrick, and Batt, the Hon. Jonathan A. Lane, and the president and secretary of the committee. A general interest was aroused, and everybody was willing to aid by funds or by work.

Mrs. M. R. Fletcher gave the use of her beautiful fields near the Common for an assembling ground and a place to spread the mammoth tent. One set of individuals contributed money for putting things in order about the ancient meeting-house, and repairing and painting the Common fence; another, at the other end of the street, headed by Mr. Frederick B. Cutter and his father, presented and erected an elegant liberty-pole, while still another collected a liberal sum for fire-works in the evening. Materials were freely loaned for tables and seats in the tent, and for arranging the antiquarian-room. Intelligent, gratuitous labor was also lavishly given. Even the selected orator, though offered pay, declined to receive any pecuniary compensation. The town became everywhere alive with preparation. The committee's plans rapidly matured. The governor and other distinguished gentlemen invited, sent in letters of acceptance or of cordial encouragement.

The streets were adorned, and private residences were profusely decorated. The morning of the 27th of August saw everything in readiness for the following programme.

1729.

1879.

SESQUI-CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE INCORPORATION
OF THE TOWN OF BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27TH, 1879.

ORDER OF EXERCISES.

1. SALUTE AT SUNRISE BY BATTERY.
2. PROCESSION AT 9 O'CLOCK A. M.

Exercises in the Tent at 11 1-2 o'clock A. M.

1. MUSIC BY THE BAND.
2. PRAYER BY THE CHAPLAIN, Rev. Grindall Reynolds.
3. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS by the president of the day, Josiah A. Stearns,
Ph D.
4. ORIGINAL ODE by the president of the day.

(Tune, "*Scots, wha ha'e.*") Sung by the audience.

Let us, o'er the lengthened way
Turn a backward thought to-day,
And the fathers' worth display.

Bless the noble men!
How with saintly step they trod,
Bowed the heart to worship God,
Scattered light and truth abroad,
Taught them to their sons!

Oh, when wild the savage strode,
 Filled with terror each abode,
 How their breasts with courage glowed,
 Trusting still in God !
 Manly lessons thus they learned,
 Every tyrant spirit spurned,
 And with noble ardor burned,
 Ever to be free.

Backward still exulting look,
 See the stand the fathers took,
 When the nation's pillars shook —
 Briton burst in twain !
 All the world sent forth a shout,
 Passed the joyous word about, —
 " Tyrants everywhere in rout,
 Let us all be men ! "

Grateful children as we stand,
 Loving sons of noble band,
 Grasping each a brother's hand,
 Like them, let us be !
 Fan the patriot flame yet higher,
 All to noble deeds aspire,
 Make the gazing world admire
 Worth and liberty !

5. HISTORICAL ORATION, by Rev. Jonathan F. Stearns, D. D., of Newark,
 N. J.

6. PSALM LXXVIII.

(Tune, *St. Martin's.*) Sung by the audience standing.

Let children hear the mighty deeds
 Which God performed of old,
 Which in our younger years we saw,
 And which our fathers told.

He bids us make his glories known,
 His works of power and grace ;
 And we 'll convey his wonders down
 Through ev'ry rising race.

Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
 And they again to theirs ;
 That generations yet unborn
 May teach them to their heirs.

Thus shall they learn, in God alone
 Their hope securely stands ;
 That they may ne'er forget his works,
 But practise his commands.

7. BENEDICTION.

At the close of these exercises, persons holding dinner-tickets will form two and two, and proceed to the tables.

Toasts, sentiments, and responsive speeches by the governor, distinguished guests, and citizens, will follow the dinner.

A salute will be fired at sunset and the bell will be rung.

There will be an antiquarian exhibition, free to all, open through the day at the Town Hall.

Conveyance may be had for a small price to the "Two Brother Rocks," visited and so named by Gov. John Winthrop and Gov. Thos. Dudley, 1638.

Evening. Open-air concert at 7.30 o'clock by the Natick Band, and display of fire-works.

Cars run as follows during the day: Leave Boston and Lowell Depot, Boston, at 7.10, 8.25, 9.40 (Special) A. M.; 12.20, 4.20, 5.25, 6.25, 11.10 P. M.

Leave Bedford at 5.55, 7, 7.50, 8.55 A. M.; 12.55, 3.30, 6, 7.40 (Special), 9.50 P. M.

Notices selected from the "Daily Advertiser" and other papers show how well the programme was executed.

A SESQUI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE INCORPORATION OF BEDFORD.

DECORATIONS OF THE TOWN AND THE MORNING PROCESSION—AN HISTORICAL ORATION BY THE REV. DR. JONATHAN F. STEARNS—AFTER-DINNER SPEECHES BY GOVERNOR TALBOT, EX-GOVERNOR RICE, CONGRESSMAN RUSSELL, JUDGE HOAR, AND OTHERS.

"It's a great day for Bedford," said a motherly old lady to her neighbor yesterday, in the large tent in which were held the exercises of the sesqui-centennial celebration of the town's incorporation. Perhaps the strange and formidable name given to the celebration upon the circulars increased the impression of something vague and imposing, which one hundred and fifty years and a long list of distinguished guests had already made profound. Considering the size of the town and the length of the name given to the occasion, the people came up nobly to the requirements of the day. Even the procession, in length of route and time occupied, had a sesqui-centennialish character, and the celebration programme was not finished till well into the evening hours. At frequent intervals about the village were fresh-looking national flags, which certainly could not be charged with duty upon a like occasion before, and many private residences were brilliant with red, white, and blue. In the Town Hall were many historic articles, some of which wanted an older term than "sesqui" to express their antiquity, and the modern part of the demonstration was in the vehicles, costumes, and persons who made the audience, though the old gentleman

who revived his brass buttons and continentals must be excepted. A sunrise salute, a long procession, an historical address, a dinner, after-dinner speeches by good speakers, an open-air concert in the evening, and a display of fire-works was the programme of the day, and it was thoroughly carried out.

DETAIL OF THE PROGRAMME.

BETWEEN THE SUNRISE GUNS AND THE EVENING FIRE-WORKS—A HOLIDAY FOR THE PEOPLE—RELICS OF THE FATHERS—BEDFORD IN CIVIL, ECCLESIASTICAL, AND LOCAL HISTORY—WHAT THE GOVERNOR SAID—MIDDLESEX COUNTY, BEDFORD, AND CONCORD, AND THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS CITIZENS.

Bedford had been decorated before the important day had actually dawned, so when the sun looked over the hills, and had recovered from his surprise at the salute of thirteen guns that greeted his every-day morning performance, he saw the village lying beneath him in unwonted beauty, with her red, white, and blue decorations strongly set off by the heavy green of the trees and pure white of the houses. Many houses were adorned, and places of historic interest were especially designated. Mention may be made of the houses of Josiah A. Stearns, the Rev. George E. Lovejoy, Merton Symonds, Mrs. George Dutton, the First Church, Isaac P. Bacon, Miss Caroline M. Fitch, A. E. Brown, Frederick Cutter, Mr. Charles Lunt, and others. Miss Fitch's house bears the following inscription: "The oldest house in this village. Older than the town. Opened as a tavern by Jeremiah Fitch, Jr., in 1773, and occupied as such until 1808. Capt. Jonathan Wilson, who was killed in the Concord fight, drew up his company of minute-men before this house, on the morning of April 19, 1775, and said to them, 'We give you a cold breakfast, boys, but we will give the British a hot supper.' Here, also, the Reading and Billerica militia rested, and left their horses before going in pursuit of the enemy." Near by, in an old orchard, is the following record: "In this orchard, one Blood, a notorious thief, was publicly and legally whipped, about the beginning of this century." The old Stearns mansion, which was built by the Rev. Joseph Penniman, who was minister of the town from 1771 to 1793, bears upon its front the following, on the right of its main entrance: "Built by Rev. Joseph Penniman, 1790." On the left, "Stearns Mansion. Rev. Samuel Stearns, 1796-1834. Owned by his son, 1879." The site of the first store, that of the old First Church, those of several residences that have

long since disappeared, were also marked. Mr. Fred Cutler and his father, Amos B. Cutler, Esq., presented to the town a liberty-pole, which was planted in the old square. In front of the village cemetery was a flag inscribed "Revolutionary Heroes," while on the other side appears "Capt. Jonathan Wilson, killed at Concord fight, April 19, 1775." In the cemetery, six graves were decorated with flags, being those of Capt. John Moore, leader of the Bedford militia at the Concord fight, Lieutenant Edward Stearns, Deacon Moses Fitch, who was wounded at the battle of White Plains, Timothy Page, who was killed in the same encounter, and Job Lane, who was wounded at Lexington, April 19, 1775. In front of the Page homestead was displayed the banner which was carried by Nathaniel Page, with the Bedford minute-men company in the Concord fight. Mrs. Kenrick's house is supposed to be the Shawshine House that records speak of in 1642. Hiram Dutton's house was an old garrison, and there Mary Lane wrested the gun from the sentinel, whom she could not convince that an Indian was lurking about the place, and fired at what he called a stump, but what her shot made a dead redskin. Historic sites generally were marked, among them being the grist-mill built before King Philip's war, by Michael Bacon; the hostelry where the Bedford, Billerica, and Reading farmers gathered to hasten to Concord and Lexington to repel British invasion; the site of the first belfry used in the town; the First Church, which for years was the only one of the town; the first store, and the house of Mrs. Stiles, erected by Rev. Nicholas Bowes, Bedford's first minister, in 1729.

In the Town Hall was a collection of venerable relics illustrating the industry, art, customs, comforts, and discomforts of old times. Among them may be named various portraits of Bedford worthies of pre-Revolutionary days, old books, deeds, and pamphlets, one being credited by the legend with being a copy of a letter of Jesus Christ, which would save the one in whose home it was from being hanged or drowned; another being the record of a conference held at Saint Georges, in the county of York, Sept. 20, 1753, between commissioners appointed by Gov. William Shirley to treat with the Eastern and Penobscot Indians. There were also a mirror in possession of the Stearns family, which is some three hundred years old; top of the pine-table from which Hancock and Adams took their meals at "Parson" Clark's house in Lexington, in 1775; chairs some two centuries old; the fiddle first used in the old church by "Jim Wright," leader of the choir for fifty years; a

scarlet broadcloth cloak, lined with satin, which was a portion of the wedding *trousseau* of Madam Stearns, the wife of the minister of the town from 1796 to 1834; sword carried by Eleazer Davis in the war of 1776, also his commission as lieutenant; pulpit-window of the First Church in Bedford, built in 1727; flintlock musket carried in the Concord fight by Solomon Lane of Bedford; mirror owned by Major-Gen. Putnam; wedding hat worn by Madam Stearns in 1797; solid silver buckle given by a British drummer to Edward Flint of Bedford, on the day of the Concord fight, for his attention to the drummer, who was wounded; Stearns family record (that of ex-Gov. Onslow Stearns of New Hampshire), wrought in silk; desk and secretary formerly owned by Francis Rotch, owner of the ship "Dartmouth," from which the tea was thrown overboard in Boston Harbor, Dec. 16, 1773; four engraved glass tumblers, given Madam Stearns on her wedding-day by Bushrod and Augustine, grand-nephews of Gen. Washington; and a copy of the "Ulster Gazette," giving a full account of the death and funeral of George Washington.

THE PROCESSION.

Gov. Talbot arrived at Bedford at nine o'clock, being driven in a barouche from his Billerica home, and accompanied by Col. Lincoln as aid. Upon his arrival, the Concord battery, which was stationed near the Middlesex Central depot, fired a salute of fourteen guns in his honor. Then Chief Marshal Calvin B. Rice and his aids, Charles Woods, Frederick Davis, and Joseph Goodwin, mounted, headed the procession, which was formed at nine o'clock, and after them the order was as follows:—

American Band of Boston, twenty-five pieces.

Concord Artillery, Capt. Benjamin.

Concord Battery, Capt. Dakin.

Six barouches containing invited guests.

Natick Brass Band, twenty-two pieces.

Shawsheen Engine Company of Bedford, forty men.

Wentworth Extinguisher Company of Lexington, sixteen men.

Barge, drawn by six gray horses, containing the girls of the Bedford public schools.

Barge, drawn by four horses, containing the boys of the schools.

Display of the trades of the town and citizens generally.

In the street parade appeared the old chaise which the Rev. Mr. Stearns, last minister of the whole town, used to ride in fifty years

ago. Into it was harnessed an old, white, huckleberry-and-milk-colored horse, so exactly resembling the one that used to take the parson every Monday morning to visit the sick, who "had up notes" the day before, that the old people thought both horse and chaise had been resurrected for the occasion. The team was driven by the minister's youngest grandson, Master Wilfred Dudley Stearns, of Nashville, Tenn.

The route of the procession was through South, Loomis, Lane, Spring, Main Streets to North Road to the North District School, countermarching to the tent on a lot opposite the Bedford Hotel, twenty-five rods from the road.

EXERCISES AT THE TENT.

It was half past twelve when the procession reached the tent. When all were gathered and the invited guests were on the platform, there were perhaps five hundred people beneath the canvas; and among those on the platform were Gov. Talbot, Ex-Gov. Rice, Ralph Waldo Emerson, A. Bronson Alcott, Judge E. R. Hoar, Congressman W. A. Russell, the Rev. Henry J. Patrick, Rev. Grindall Reynolds, Rev. Wm J. Batt, Eben S. Stearns, D. D., Chancellor of the University of Nashville, Tenn., Rev. H. F. Jenks, Rev. John F. Gleason, Norfolk, Conn., Rev. J. F. Stearns, D. D., Hon. John S. Keyes, Frank B. Sanborn, Rev. Mr. Hussey of Billerica, Rev. H. A. Hazen, Rev. Dr. S. K. Lothrop, Rev. George E. Lovejoy, Rev. Dr. Grout, Samuel Hoar, Esq., Josiah A. Stearns, Ph. D., president of the day, and the selectmen and clergy of all the neighboring towns.

A medley of patriotic airs by the Natick Band opened the exercises; and prayer by the Rev. Grindall Reynolds followed.

Then the president of the day, Mr. Josiah A. Stearns, Ph. D., gave a brief address, reciting how the committees on the celebration had been appointed and how they had discharged their duties.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

Friends, Sons and Daughters of Bedford, — I congratulate you on the auspices of this occasion. A few days ago the heavens scowled, the skies wept, and though there were occasional signs of brightness, all was dark and portentous. So has it been with our period of preparation. Our toils have been full of anxiety and despondency, but now, the skies smile, and if there still be some of nature's

clouds above us, they can only serve as a darkened glass to secure our eyes against the effulgent glory of a divinely descending benediction. At an autumn town-meeting, Sept. 30, 1878, it was voted that the town would celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth year of its existence.

A large and able committee was chosen to carry this vote into effect. They were endowed with full powers, and authorized to fill all vacancies and to appoint all needed subcommittees.

In town meeting assembled, an orator was chosen from among Bedford's own sons, to prepare an historical address for the occasion.

The committee began their work. Various changes were necessarily made in their organization, till, at the present time, it consists of the following gentlemen : —

JOSIAH A. STEARNS <i>Chairman.</i>	CYRUS PAGE.
REV. GEO. E. LOVEJOY, <i>Secretary.</i>	CHAS. A. COREY.
OLIVER J. LANE, <i>Treasurer.</i>	CALVIN RICE.
JEROME A. BACON.	M. B. WEBBER.
A. P. SAMPSON.	AMOS B. CUTLER.
HENRY WOOD.	E. G. LOOMIS.
A. E. BROWN.	CHAS. C. CLARKE.

SAMUEL HUCKINS.

Under this committee several subcommittees, both of gentlemen and ladies, were appointed, partly from the people at large for the performance of specific duties, and most efficiently have they wrought in their several spheres. Their names are registered, and will appear on the records of our celebration.

As the town could not raise money for the purpose without an especial enabling act, it was determined to appeal to the sons and daughters of Bedford for assistance. Only small sums were asked for, and they came in from all directions, not only from the children, but from their "uncles, aunts, and cousins," till the general fund, aside from the sums contributed for special objects, amounts to more than \$600. The various committees have toiled with unwearied faithfulness and through much anxiety; but to-day they come forth triumphantly and present you with their finished work.

I need not detail its particulars. You will find them sufficiently set forth upon the printed programme. And now, throwing off all care, we are ready to join you in the entertainments of the day. We do so with the full assurance that when we shall have listened to our town's history, we shall have no occasion to hang our heads, but much reason to rejoice and to glorify our ancestry.

An original ode of four stanzas was next sung to the tune "Scots, wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled," a part of the audience singing for the occasion, and the other part so far behind that they might have intended their strains for the next sesqui-centennial.

Finally the singers came out together at the end, and then the president of the day introduced the orator, his brother, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan F. Stearns, of Newark, N. J. Dr. Stearns was closely listened to and frequently applauded, but as his discourse is here printed in full, any abstract of it would be out of place.

The Seventy-eighth Psalm, which had been printed to be sung by the audience, owing to the lateness of the hour was omitted. Benediction by the chaplain closed the exercises.

AFTER-DINNER SPEECHES.

Bedford Engine Company had entertained the visiting company from Lexington at the Bedford House, where a very fine repast was served in the dance-hall, and the excellent and generous dinner provided by Caterer Tufts at the tent, in his best style, had been partaken of by nearly five hundred people, when the president, at about four o'clock, called the assembly to order for after-dinner speeches. There was music by the band, and then the toast-master, Rev. John F. Gleason, of Norfolk, Conn., a native of Bedford, announced the first toast, "The Commonwealth." Three cheers were given for Gov. Talbot, and His Excellency spoke as follows:—

GOV. TALBOT'S SPEECH.

Mr. President,—As chief magistrate of the Commonwealth, I bring you her congratulations upon this high festival of Bedford's loyal children. Let me offer with those congratulations, my own hearty personal greeting as a citizen of the mother town of Billerica, as a neighbor and a friend. I deem the presence of the executive peculiarly fitting on occasions like this, when the people of our ancient towns meet to celebrate their anniversaries, rehearse their inspiring history, revive the memory of their founders, and contemplate the simple, sturdy qualities of character, in which the very basis of our Commonwealth is laid. We read in the Massachusetts Bill of Rights, that—

"A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, and a constant adherence to those of piety, justice,

moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to maintain a free government."

It is because events like this recall to us the principles of the Constitution, and that piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality so necessary to their conservation, that the Commonwealth may well give them her official countenance and encouragement. Upon an adherence to these virtues depends the welfare of the towns; upon the welfare of the towns rests the prosperity, nay, the very perpetuity of the State. We owe to the towns what is distinctively the Massachusetts character. It is the product of the red school-house, the village church, and the town meeting. Preserve these nurseries of popular education, of religious freedom, and of pure democracy, and we need fear none of the dangers which may seem to menace the future of the Republic. Now, Mr. President, the borough of Bedford passes into the venerable company of municipal corporations which have numbered one hundred and fifty years or more. Nearly sixscore of those in our borders have preceded her, and others will follow soon. Westford reaches her sesqui-centennial less than a month hence; Wilmington, a year later; Tewksbury, in three years; and half a dozen others in different parts of the State within five years. Among her new companions, Bedford stands the peer of any. She cannot boast, as can her more ancient and famous neighbor, of sons who have made themselves conspicuous in the councils of the State and nation, who have worn the judicial ermine, or led eager disciples along philosophic mazes of which no man can discern the beginning or the end. But she points with just pride to accomplished and devoted scholars who, like the late President Stearns, gave the best fruit of their talent and culture to the cause of sound education. She displays, too, a long record of Bedford men, standing in the front ranks of business and the learned professions; enterprising, successful merchants at the centres of trade, and at home, a sturdy, prosperous yeomanry, the sinew and muscle of the town. It is often said that, go where you will, in whatever part of the world you may travel, you will find our old Commonwealth represented in every vocation calling for skill, brains, or self-sacrifice. You find everywhere the New England missionary, lawyer, doctor, merchant, manufacturer, and navigator. In all this the little town of Bedford has borne her full part.

Mr. President, I wish to express once more the pleasure it gives

me to take part in these festivities, and the personal interest I feel in all of you as neighbors and friends. Let us not forget in our rejoicing, that this day, like all others, brings us a duty. That duty, as I read it, is to adhere more closely to the principles on which our fathers founded this government, and transmit them to posterity in all their purity and strength. Do this, and as we honor the memory of our fathers, so will our children, when we have passed away, "rise up and call us blessed."

THE HON. WILLIAM A. RUSSELL.

"The President of the United States" was the next toast, and the Hon. William A. Russell, member of the national legislature, responded. Mentioning his lack of acquaintance with the town, he contrasted the virtue of the small towns with the vicious tendencies of large cities. In this connection, he spoke with praise of the action of President Hayes in obstructing the attempts to give the cities power to offset the vote of the towns in the country. His mention of the character of President Hayes was applauded by his listeners, and he said that the Southern policy of conciliation, though not entirely successful, would doubtless become so. The United States having ceased its hostilities, proceeded to the honest payment of her debts with a fixed currency, in accord with other nations of the globe, and is now to enter upon a career of industrial and commercial prosperity which seems to be a fitting supplement to her recent heroic deeds. The President is in sympathy with the best interests of the whole country. With returning prosperity and the firmness of the President, our nation will maintain its integrity, and all its people will be protected, at home and abroad.

EX-GOVERNOR RICE.

"Middlesex County" was toasted next, and as a representative of the county not only, but also the State, Ex-Gov. Rice was called upon, and as he rose he was greeted with cheers, which bore witness to the popular esteem in which he is held. The substance of his speech follows:—

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have been trying to discover what fortunate incident or circumstance brought me within the circle of your kind remembrance, and extended to me the privilege and the courtesy of coming up here to Bedford to see how you would celebrate this notable and interesting anniversary. I have been enjoying the day without any limitation and without any

restraint, though I confess to you, sir, that when I saw that ponderous numerical adjective which preceded the announcement of your celebration [*laughter*], I thought there must be something crooked and sinister about the occasion. [*Laughter.*] “Sesqui-centennial,” thinks I to myself, and I began to rub up all the ancient Latin in the primers and in the small dictionaries containing phrases of various languages, to see whether I could find any interpretation of that long-tailed and mysterious word. [*Laughter.*] Now the whole thing is explained. You invited me to come up here and listen to an oration and eat a dinner with you, and now you impose upon me your sesqui-centennial. [*Laughter.*] You have asked me to say something in regard to the county of Middlesex. I am a native of the county of Middlesex, and am glad to be here because I am thus linked to the town of Bedford, and therefore I was brought into your celebration. The county is not so important in our State as it is in some other States, or in other countries, where it forms a little sovereignty by itself. With us it seems to amount to little more than geographical boundaries with judicial limitations and a few secondary powers, while the city and the town appear to us of greater prominence. I agree most heartily with what the orator said about the importance of the towns, and also with what was said about Jefferson and De Tocqueville. As His Excellency, the governor, has well said, so long as we preserve these little municipalities, the State will be safe, and as long as the States are safe, the country will be safe. But, sir, what the great Webster said of Massachusetts on a notable occasion, may be said of Middlesex County: “There are Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill,” there they will be forever; they are here in our glorious old county of Middlesex. It was here in Concord that “the embattled farmers stood and fired the shot heard round the world.” [*Applause.*] The echoes of that shot have not yet ceased their reverberations. They come back to us on the wings of the air. They are gathered into the life of every day. They have entered into the civilization of our country and of the world. Liberty has taken from them new life. It was fired in the hope of a higher and purer manhood.

But we need not go back to Revolutionary days for praises for the county of Middlesex. In the recent war of the rebellion, who answered first to the call? From what county in Massachusetts were the men first in line? Who first shed their blood to maintain in its integrity the morality which their fathers saved, but men who

went from the old county of Middlesex? It seems to me that much of the historic greatness of Massachusetts may be traced back to Middlesex, and that she has contributed more to inspire patriotism and the hope of the world than any other community of her size on the face of the earth. [*Applause.*] She is an important division of our Commonwealth. She is the largest county in territorial extent save one. She has a population of nearly 300,000 people, and her wealth amounts, I believe, to something like \$300,000,000. She is a community in herself, and if she be called upon to do her duty in the present, as her representatives have always done in the past, I know that she is prepared to answer any reasonable expectation. I rejoice in American prosperity and in the present revival of business, and in the full share which Middlesex County bears in the maintenance of American industry.

The next toast was "Jonathan Bacon, a principal inhabitant of Bedford, directed by the General Court to assemble the citizens of the town for their first town meeting."

This called up Mr. Albert Bacon, who said he "supposed he was the oldest Bacon in town," when, the audience perceiving a joke, and beginning to make merry, the president responded, "Oh, never mind the age, we all love the Bacon that is so well preserved." Mr. Bacon, recovering himself immediately, went on with a very interesting account of his illustrious ancestor, and of the Bacon family generally, that has played a conspicuous part in the history of the town.

"Our chaplain, — coming to us weekly in the spirit of Concord, he proclaims peace and good-will among men," elicited a response from the Rev. Grindall Reynolds of Concord, who also fills the Unitarian pulpit of Bedford at the present time.

REV. GRINDALL REYNOLDS'S RESPONSE.

I should hardly have been willing to occupy your time had I not wished to express the satisfaction I feel in being, through this office with which you have honored me, connected with this celebration; one which must be pleasant to remember and full of good influence in the town for many years to come, — for all years to come. You have kindly said that I come in the spirit of Concord. I shall leave my friend, Judge Hoar, to say what the spirit of the town of Concord is; but if our chairman refers to the kindly quality of concord,

how could I come to a centennial and to this sesqui-centennial in any other spirit? For what is a town celebration but the remembrance of love and good-will enacted into practical facts? What is the life of a town but the drawing of its people out of separation, out of isolation, into relations of the most satisfactory and helpful character? What is a town meeting, with all its varied interests, what is the church, what are schools, what even are all such material things as the very pathways and roads through our villages, but so many bonds to unite those who otherwise would be separated, each man caring for his own business, without thinking much of other people's interests and needs? And especially how could I come with anything but the spirit of concord to a town whose very soil keeps in memory a great act of concord. You go to the banks of the Concord River, and there are two stones named the "Two Brothers," which celebrate and keep vivid in memory the kindly and friendly action of Gov. John Winthrop and Lieut.-Gov. Thomas Dudley. And so in truth the first land in this region of Bedford, which was dedicated to the occupation of the white man and to the uses of civilization, was thus dedicated through a great and beautiful act of concord.

You have heard the admirable address of this morning, and from it you can see what one little town can bring of great and honorable import from the storehouse of its memories, from the ample storehouse of its history. And it seems to me that the best influence and the most useful result of a centennial celebration is that it thus engages all the people of a town (and I may say all the people of neighboring towns) in common interests and common thoughts of a noble and strengthening character. And so I believe that when the pleasantries of this hour shall have passed, when all that has been done so well shall be simply a thing of memory, still, after all, it will be the memory of your common interests in something noble and good, and that this town will always be a better town, with higher feelings and especially with more love and good-will and concord, for such a memory. [*Applause.*]

"Billerica, the loving mother who endowed her daughter Bedford with more than half her present territory," called out the Rev. H. A. Hazen, historian of Billerica, who said: Bedford represents the first dismemberment of Billerica. Since then, Tewksbury, Lowell, Wilmington, and Carlisle have each taken a slice of Billerica.

Every town has its own peculiar history. You can't put it all into the census returns. It is character in the men and women that counts. He regretted that the "Two Brothers" rocks had not been made the boundary between the two towns, and thought a permanent inscription should be placed on these stones as a memorial of interest to the people who are to come after us.

"Concord and Bedford was given. Their intimate relations are fitly represented by Concord's distinguished son, the grand-nephew of Bedford's second minister, Nathaniel Sherman." Hon. Judge E. R. Hoar replied : —

Mr. President, and Ladies and Gentlemen, — Considering it for the time being as the principal distinction of my life that I had one of the ministers of Bedford for an uncle [*laughter*], though on pausing to think of it for a moment, I do not see that it was a distinction that I myself achieved, still, I am very much gratified at being called upon by you to express to this town, on this delightful occasion, the feelings of the town of Concord towards the town of Bedford.

I speak, sir, with a certain distrust, because, with that care which the town of Concord always takes that any of her children who are liable to go astray shall be looked after, I find myself seated with the town-clerk of Concord on my right, and three of the selectmen immediately before me [*laughter and applause*], and if I do not say exactly what Concord would like to have said on this occasion, you see I am in a fair way to be stopped. [*Laughter and applause.*] Now, the relations of Concord and Bedford have always, I believe, been intimate and affectionate.

When I heard or read, rather, that this was to be a "sesqui-centennial" performance, I went to the dictionary like Gov. Rice [*laughter*], but not being so modest a man as he is, I did not come to the conclusion that it referred to my speech. [*Laughter.*] But I saw through it at once, when I came to find what the meaning was in the dictionary. I found this "sesqui" to be a thing and a half. As I say, I saw through it at once; the natural instinct of the town of Concord would enable me to do so. [*Applause.*] Why, these Bedford people, knowing that we are some on the centennial up there, are going to get up a centennial and a half. [*Laughter and applause.*] As they say in the game of poker, "I see you, and go you one better." [*Laughter*] I call upon heaven and earth to witness that I know nothing about the game of poker, so you will

pardon the quotation. [*Laughter and applause.*] But, on contemplating what you were to celebrate, I thought, What is it that our Bedford friends and neighbors are going to celebrate on this occasion? There are various ways of looking at it.

The first view that occurred to me was this, — that one hundred and fifty years ago there were a people that were discontented at having so far to go to meeting, and they concluded not to go so far any longer; and now here is this great audience and this immense procession coming together one hundred and fifty years after, to commemorate that event. The question would at once be raised, Why didn't they adopt the remedy that would occur to a very large portion of people nowadays and stay at home? [*Laughter and applause.*] Well, in the next place, being excellent, pious folks, these Bedford people at that time, why didn't they think of the remedy which has occurred to their successors in this pleasant town, that if the mountain could not go to Mahomet, why, have Mahomet come some Sunday afternoon over to the mountain, dividing one minister between them, the way we have done since? [*Laughter.*] Well, there is another fact, a thing that makes the proceeding seem singular, and that is, that now, when you are celebrating their refusing to go so far to meeting, I believe that at this moment a majority of the church-going population in the town of Bedford go regularly up to Concord to meeting every Sunday to the Catholic Church, which I suspect their pious fathers would willingly have seen located a great deal farther away, so that it shows that the mere fact of adopting some method to avoid going to meeting at a distance is of such temporary interest that it would scarcely be considered of great moment on this occasion.

My friend from Billerica has said “that Bedford people did not do any pioneer work.” Why, yes, they did; they were a part of Concord, our flesh and blood, until they left us; they were a part of the family, and have fought it out on the same line as the rest of us.

The way we look at it up there is, that this is the oldest daughter of the family, setting up housekeeping, marrying into a Billerica connection. [*Laughter.*] Bedford was the oldest daughter, the first that was taken off from the old town of Concord. They have since chopped off several portions of her. “Nine Acre Corner” once petitioned to be made into a separate town. If the petition had been granted, we could not have gone out of doors without stepping upon some one of the family, like the “Old Woman in

her Shoe." Of course, then, we have always been affectionate. There is a neighborhood in towns and a friendliness in towns, just as in families and individuals, and we have always counted on you.

One curious thing occurred to me during the delivery of the oration (if His Excellency will excuse my referring to it). When I heard it stated that Concord gave its hearty and willing assent to Bedford's incorporation as a separate town, and that Billerica opposed it until after the General Court had ordered it (they made the best of what they could not help), I noticed that, in the recital of the act of the incorporation it says, "And it was enacted by the lieutenant-governor and council," etc. And I wondered whether they might not have had some Billerica gentleman as governor at the time, and the town was so much opposed to it that the lieutenant-governor had to see the thing through. [*Great laughter and applause*]. It looked very probable. [*Renewed laughter*]. Well now, in thus making up two towns, and joining yourselves to Billerica, you have undoubtedly escaped some things which you would have had if attached to Concord. In the first place, you have escaped the State Prison [*great laughter and applause*], by which, I mean collectively, in your municipal capacity [*renewed laughter*]; your individual chances are not at all impaired. [*Uproarious laughter*].

But I notice that whether on any Scriptural basis or not, in your railroad system in this town, you have a broad road that leads to Concord and you have a straight and narrow gauge that leads to Billerica. [*Hilarious mirth*]. But I do not want to disregard the fact that the orator of the day rehearsed to us, that one hundred years ago the people of this town disapproved of all levity. I trust they still continue to; perhaps they do, perhaps they do not. But, to leave all levity aside, what you here celebrate to-day is the establishment of a New England town, and the importance and value of such an occurrence cannot, in my judgment, be overestimated. One of those communities which, as John Adams said, "rested upon the meeting-house, the school-house, the town meeting and the training-field," being the four elements of the man and citizen which have produced consequences in the government of the country which no other system of popular government has ever approached.

"Men that stir senates with a statesman's words and look on armies with a leader's eye," have been the men, in our country's history, who were trained up in these little democracies.

What makes a town in some parts of our country is a tavern and a blacksmith's shop; what made a town in Massachusetts, from the beginning, was a meeting-house and a school-house. [*Applause.*] It is well that you come together and remember from what fathers you are descended, what honest power and conduct marked their lives and the history of your town. It is for us to remember with pleasure and pride that you are a part of Concord, you were with us in the Revolution.

We remember that this little town of eight hundred inhabitants sent to the late civil war its eighty-two soldiers, of whom eighteen never returned; we remember that Bedford has been true to the principles upon which it is founded; on the principles to which, we trust, every town in Massachusetts, in all trial, will be found adhering. [*Tremendous applause.*]

A toast was given to "Ralph Waldo Emerson, grandson of Concord's most patriotic minister, that high son of liberty, the Rev. William Emerson. The world honors him for his own freedom of thought and for his philosophic wisdom."

The president of the day stated that he had invited Ralph Waldo Emerson to speak and he had declined, but he would call on him again, in hopes that he would respond. Mr. Emerson spoke very briefly: "I spoke the truth, sir, at first. I am sorry that I am not able to respond. I can understand with joy the speeches that I hear, but I cannot make one."

The president replied: "It is a satisfaction to the people of Bedford just to see the man whom they admire, and, if I judge them rightly, whom they love." [*Applause.*]

"The First Church in Billerica, which furnished Bedford with half its original church-members," called up the Rev. C. C. Hussey, of Billerica, who believed in these old country towns, and advised his hearers to stay here, and keep up the culture and tone of the place, rather than to go to the cities. The First Church of Billerica has a most honorable record. He believed in these old churches, and would have these centres of worship well supported. Let the denominations bury the old schisms of the past, and go forward together to bless community by being each other's helpers.

"Schools and Education, they find a loving advocate in that friend of high culture and veteran teacher, A. Bronson Alcott.

His pupils have in their turn sent forth 'Little Men,' and 'Little Women,' and 'My Boys,' to delight and instruct the world."

The venerable Mr. Alcott, now an octogenarian, replied to this toast in a lively and spirited manner. He recognized with pride the allusion to the illustrious authoresses, his daughters, and acknowledged their skill in the use of words. He urged upon all classes the need of more thorough training, especially in our mother tongue. He claimed that now the women are far more accurate than men in the use of English. He would have more culture and refinement in our primary-school teaching. He sharply criticised the use of the word "depot," when we mean station; and urged that our sisters be admitted to all the opportunities that are open to their brothers.

"Samuel Fitch, the first town-clerk of Bedford, grandfather of Deacon Moses, wounded at White Plains, and of Jeremiah Fitch, Jr., at whose house the minute-men were entertained on the morning of April 19, 1775, and great-grandfather of the Jeremiah Fitch who imported the bell, and gave the clock and the Bible for the old society, and the land for a meeting-house to the new, and was a constant benefactor to all classes of Bedford people."

Rev. Henry Fitch Jenks, grandson of the last Jeremiah, responded by pleasant allusions to the responsibilities of the early town "clarks"; and by apt and striking selections from the Bible, excused himself, as a young man, from further speaking in the presence of age and wisdom.

"The 'Two Brothers' or 'Brother Rocks,' so named by Gov. John Winthrop and Deputy-Gov. Thomas Dudley in 1638," was responded to by the following letter from the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, who counts among his ancestry both Dudley and Winthrop.

"BROOKLINE, MASS., 22 August, 1879.

"JOSIAH A. STEARNS, Esq.,

Chairman of Celebration Committee:

"*My dear Sir,* — I am compelled to abandon all idea of attending the Bedford celebration on the 27th inst. It would have given me great pleasure to visit your town on its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and to listen to the story of its rise and progress, as it will be told by your distinguished brother. I should have eagerly embraced the opportunity to look on 'The Two Brothers,' — those monumental stones within your town limits which com-

memorate one of the most characteristic and charming incidents in our earliest Massachusetts history.

“The controversies of Gov. Winthrop and Deputy-Gov. Dudley, and their reconciliation in 1638, while your town was a part of Concord and Billerica, furnish an edifying example to contentious statesmen in our own and in all other days. As I inherit the blood of both these first fathers of Massachusetts, I may be pardoned for not presuming to decide which had the best of the quarrel, or which deserves most credit for its amicable settlement. Mutual concessions and brotherly love were abundantly displayed by them both, and, instead of throwing stones at each other, they made the imperishable rocks their witnesses, that all malice and evil speaking and strife between them had ceased.

“I cannot but hope that such an inscription may be put on these historic landmarks that they may never be in danger of being overlooked or mistaken. The Bedford of New England may thus have almost as notable an association with Thomas Dudley and John Winthrop as the Bedford of old England has with John Bunyan, whose statue I saw there a few years ago, not far from the jail in which he wrote ‘Pilgrim’s Progress.’

“I thank the citizens of Bedford for their most kind invitation, and you for its courteous communication, and regret my inability to accept it.

“Believe me, dear sir, with great regard, your obliged and obedient servant,

“ROBERT C. WINTHROP.”

The president now said these rocks had been so long visited only by the *moles*, he would make it an even thing, and call upon Mr. *Batt* to speak in their behalf. Rev. William J. Batt, a former pastor of Bedford, but now settled in Stoneham, responded. He commended the wisdom of the men whose lives and deeds are commemorated by these historic rocks, and urged the protection and preservation of these sacred memorials of the past, so long as time shall endure.

“Capt Jonathan Wilson,” killed while leading the minute-men of Bedford, in 1775, called for a dirge by the band.

“Bedford, the geographical centre and heart of Middlesex County,” called up the Rev. H. J. Patrick, former pastor of the Evangelical Church here, at present settled in Newton. He said

he had lived in Bedford long enough to know and love the town. Bedford was my first love, and I love it still. Its rich farms are always attractive. Bedford is the safest place to bring up a family of children that I know. I shall always rejoice in the prosperity of the place.

Several toasts were unexpectedly but necessarily omitted for want of time. Among them were "The workers upon our committee. No one is better qualified to speak for them than the secretary, a prime mover, a skilled and efficient supporter of the cause, Rev. George E. Lovejoy."

"The sons and daughters of Bedford, wandering North or South, turn back in loyal devotion, like the needle to the pole." This was intended to bring out Chancellor Eben S. Stearns, D. D., of the University of Nashville, Tenn.

"Our Editors, a press-gang which promotes order and intelligence," was a call for Mr. Frank B. Sanborn.

"Pages of History. Nathaniel Page, ensign of the Bedford minute-men in 1775, and his daughter, Mrs. Ruhamah Lane, still living in town, with intellect unimpaired, at the age of ninety-two, and at whose house the Page tribe have to-day been assembled." Rev. Lucius R. Page and George W. Morse, Esq.

"The Reed Family, one of the oldest in Bedford." This was responded to by a congratulatory telegram from the Reed family, assembled at Taunton, and signed by the Rev. S. Hopkins Emery, a former pastor in Bedford.

The following, among other letters, were received from invited guests : —

"BOSTON, Aug. 25, '79.

"*Dear Sir,* — It is with great regret that I respond in the negative to your invitation for Wednesday. It would afford me very great satisfaction to be present, but I am not so far recovered from my accident as to allow me that privilege. Hoping that everything may go off to the honor of your good old town and the benefit of American history,

"I am with great respect, yours, etc.

"MARSHALL P. WILDER.

"JOSIAH A. STEARNS, *Chairman Celebration Com.*"

“NAHANT, Aug. 23, '79.

“*Gentlemen*,—Please to accept my thanks for the honor you have done me by inviting me to the Bedford celebration, on the 27th proximo. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to visit the old familiar scenes, and to listen to the address of the friend and guide of my youth, the Rev. Dr. Stearns, long revered and loved by all who know him. An engagement to be at another meeting obliges me to decline this one.

“May the memories which will be revived on this day serve to incite the youth of your ancient town to emulate the good deeds of their fathers.

“Yours very truly,

“AMOS A. LAWRENCE.

“MESSRS. WEBBER, CLARK, STEARNS AND LOOMIS, *Committee*.”

“LEXINGTON, Aug. 19, 1879.

“JOSIAH A. STEARNS, Esq.,

Chairman of the Committee of Invitation:

“In reply to your polite invitation to be with you at your celebration, I must say that while I thank you for the honor you have shown me, it is very doubtful whether I shall be able to attend. I can say most sincerely that ordinarily it would give me great pleasure, but while ‘the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.’ Age and growing infirmities admonish me to avoid extra fatigue and excitement. I can only say that, if the day should be favorable and I should feel pretty well, I may possibly attend; but the chances are against it.

“I regret it the more because I have always felt an interest in your town and people. Having been your guest on several festive occasions in days gone by, I have always been pleased with the zeal and unanimity with which your people have acted, all classes and conditions of the population manifesting a deep interest in the occasion.

“In fact, if I mistake not, the good people of Bedford have *always been ready to turn out promptly*, whenever duty called. On the 19th of April, 1775, Bedford required no public command to go forth and meet the foe of popular rights. It was enough to know that the oppressor was abroad, to enforce the arbitrary acts of the British Parliament. The gallant Capt. Wilson did not stop to inquire whether the British had slaughtered any Bedford men, or had even set foot upon Bedford soil. It was enough for him and

his patriotic men to know that human rights had been invaded and freemen had been slain, to induce him to appear in the field and add one more to the list of martyrs to the cause of freedom. What Bedford was then, she has continued to be, and I think there is good reason to believe she will continue to maintain her character by showing herself ready for every good work.

“Very respectfully yours,

“CHARLES HUDSON.”

The festivities in the tent closed, and the people went forth to view the variously decorated and beautifully illuminated dwellings, while the roar of forty-two guns and the ringing of the bell performed an evening salute.

When all was quiet, the multitude repaired again to the celebration grounds, and were entertained by a brilliant display of fireworks and the stirring music of an open-air concert given by the Natick Band.

Every undertaking of the day seemed to prosper. The “Arlington Advocate” does but speak the general voice when it says, “Never have we been present on an occasion when every one seemed to be enjoying themselves so fully. No accident marred the pleasures of the day, and the management can but feel that it was a success.”

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